

RIDING WAVES OF DISSENT: COUNTER-IMPERIAL IMPULSES IN THE AGE
OF FULLER AND MELVILLE

A Dissertation

by

NICHOLAS M. LAWRENCE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: English

RIDING WAVES OF DISSENT: COUNTER-IMPERIAL IMPULSES IN THE AGE
OF FULLER AND MELVILLE

A Dissertation

by

NICHOLAS M. LAWRENCE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Larry J. Reynolds
Committee Members,	Dennis Berthold
	M. Jimmie Killingsworth
	John H. Lenihan
Head of Department,	M. Jimmie Killingsworth

August 2009

Major Subject: English

ABSTRACT

Riding Waves of Dissent: Counter-Imperial Impulses in the Age of Fuller and Melville.

(August 2009)

Nicholas M. Lawrence, B.A., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;

M.A., Western Carolina University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Larry J. Reynolds

This dissertation examines the interplay between antebellum frontier literature and the counter-imperial impulses that impelled the era's political, cultural, and literary developments. Focusing on selected works by James Fenimore Cooper, Margaret Fuller, Francis Parkman, and Herman Melville, I use historicist methods to reveal how these authors drew upon and contributed to a strong and widespread, though ultimately unsuccessful, resistance to the discourse of Manifest Destiny that now identifies the age. For all their important differences, each of the frontier writings I examine reflects the presence of a culturally-pervasive anxiety over issues such as environmental depletion, slavery, Indian removal, and expansion's impact on the character of a nation ostensibly founded on republican, anti-imperialist principles. Moreover, the later works reflect an intensification of such anxiety as the United States entered into war with Mexico and the slavery debate came to increasingly dominate the political scene.

Chapter I emphasizes the ideological contestations bred by the antebellum United States' westward march, and signals a departure from recent critical tendencies to omit

those contestations in order to portray a more stable narrative of American imperialism. The chapter concludes by arguing that Cooper established an initial narrative formulation that sought to suppress counter-imperial impulses within a mainline triumphalist vision. Chapter II examines Fuller's first published book, *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, in the context of hotbutton controversies over expansion that informed the 1844 presidential contest; employing the metaphor of the dance as her governing trope for engaging unfamiliar landscapes, peoples, and even modes of community, Fuller placed persistently marginalized counter-imperial impulses at the center of her western travelogue. Chapter III discusses Parkman's sub-textual engagement with controversies surrounding the Mexican War; though thoroughly invested in conquest ideologies, *Oregon Trail* nevertheless resonates with the war's most popular negative associations. Chapter IV explores Melville's attunement to national ambivalences towards rhetorics of Manifest Destiny from the late 1840s through the early 1850s. During this stage of his career, Melville both paid tribute to the Anglo-American triumphalism freighted the antebellum era, and enacted a powerful articulation of the era's counter-imperial impulse.

To my son, Hayden Reese Lawrence

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge the many people to whom I am indebted. I want to begin by thanking the English Department faculty and staff members at Texas A&M, for their inexhaustible intellectual and emotional support, and constant willingness to answer questions, at every stage of my graduate studies here. Along these lines I especially want to thank Sally Robinson, the department's outstanding Director of Graduate Studies, and on whose listening ears, sound advice, and overall good cheer I relied throughout the writing of my dissertation. I also want to give a special acknowledgment to Paulette Leshner, for so patiently and cheerfully answering my endless stream of questions throughout my time at Texas A&M. Thanks also to the English Department for the summer dissertation fellowship I was awarded in 2008; it was during that summer that my project really took shape, and I came to fully believe in what I was doing; thanks are due to the department also, as well as to the Melburn G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, for providing me with invaluable opportunities to present my work to colleagues at seminars and symposiums throughout the writing of my dissertation.

I have been continually grateful for the high level of generosity and intellectual community fostered by members of this English Department as well as across the field of English studies. Thanks to Susan Stabile, in whose amazing course on women's memoir writing the seeds of my Margaret Fuller chapter were planted, and who over the years has taught me much about being a reader and cultural critic. Thanks to Jeffrey

Steele, for taking the time to offer feedback and advice on my treatment of Fuller at the American Literature Association conference in 2006. And a special thanks to the anonymous readers at *Western American Literature*, for their helpful feedback on my work on Francis Parkman's *Oregon Trail*, and for their decision to publish an excerpt of my chapter in their journal.

I am delighted to be able in this space to acknowledge Joe Golsan, Ede Hilton, Pixie Wellington, and everyone I have worked with at *South Central Review* over the years, for providing me with so many opportunities to grow as a critic, an editor, and a multi-tasker; and speaking of the incomparable Joe Golsan, I would be remiss here if I did not give a shout-out to the 2008-2009 North Carolina Tar Heels, whose dramatic national championship run paced the homestretch of my dissertation in strange and exhilarating ways. Thanks also to the board members and artistic contributors to Stage Center Community Theater in Bryan, for the much-needed imaginative and social outlet away from academia, and for showing such confidence in me over these last several years. I am proud to call many of you good friends.

Thank you, Douglas Brooks, for everything. Your intellectual vigor, breathtaking talent, personal warmth, and—most of all—your sense of life as an adventure never to be taken for granted, I will never forget. Doug, you were the kind of teacher that I will spend my lifetime trying to be.

While a graduate student at Texas A&M I have been blessed by many friendships that will forever enrich my life. I especially want to thank Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Chris Morrow, Brad Thomas, Dawn Thomas, Shannon Peters, Sarah Peters, Antony Rintala,

Amy Montz, Jeremiah Hickey, Meghan Gilbert-Hickey, Cody Barteet, Miranda Green-Barteet, Steve Terry, Gina Opdyke Terry, and Nicole McDaniel Carder.

To the four incredible people who served on my dissertation committee I am of course especially and eternally grateful. Thanks to John H. Lenihan for the great conversations about the myths and realities of the American West early in the development of my project, and for pointing me in the direction of many historians whose work proved invaluable throughout the process. Thanks to M. Jimmie Killingsworth, who welcomed my wife and me to this department so graciously when we arrived, and from whom I have learned so much about argument, writing, and the American soul. Thanks to Dennis Berthold, whose door was always open to me during the writing of my dissertation, and whose generous and piercing feedback immeasurably improved the final product.

To my committee chair, Larry J. Reynolds, whose even-handed and innovative scholarship, and overall professionalism, I will always aspire to emulate: I cannot say enough about how fortunate I feel to have you as a mentor and friend. Your uncanny sense of when to push me and when to provide emotional support, as well as your steady encouragement that I stick to my guns, made all the difference over the last few years. It is no exaggeration to say that without you, neither the conception nor the completion of this project would have been possible.

During coursework as a Master's student at Western Carolina University, I recall a professor reflecting on the first day that in all likelihood, the reason we were sitting in that room at all was because someone had taken the time to read to us when we were

children. To my father, Sheldon Lawrence and my mother, Linda Hamby, and to my stepfather Charles Hamby, I thank you all so much for always encouraging me not only to read, but to be as fair-minded and independent as I could be; I thank my three wonderful parents for the love and support you have always given me, and the unflagging faith you have shown in me, through good times and bad. I also want to thank my wonderful brother, Mychal Hamby, whom I love dearly, and of whose physical and intellectual talents, and kind heart, I have always been more than a little in awe.

For my wife, Dana Eatman Lawrence (it was exciting but also really tough business, both of us finishing dissertations at the same time, wasn't it?), there are no words to sufficiently express the gratitude and undying love that I feel. I can only say here that through the best and darkest moments of this process alike, you have been a steady fount of love, patience, and encouragement that I could do this thing, or anything else that I set my mind to. Finally, I am so happy to be able to thank my son and eternal best buddy, Hayden Reese Lawrence, for making every day a surprise and an adventure, and for always teaching me what matters most in life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
The American West and Ideological Conflict.....	5
Recovering the United States' Counter-Imperial Impulse.....	14
Big Talk and the Counter-Imperial Impulse in Cooper's <i>The Pioneers</i>	30
II MARGARET FULLER'S DANCE WITH THE WEST: TRANSCULTURALISM AND COUNTER-IMPERIAL DISCOURSE IN <i>SUMMER ON THE LAKES, IN 1843</i>	65
Disputing "Hard and Unconscionable Terms": The 1844 Presidential Election.....	67
"Would You Speak to a Man, First Learn His Language!": Big Talk and Margaret Fuller.....	81
"Wild Dances and Sudden Song": Transculturalism in <i>Summer On the Lakes</i>	87
III COUNTER-IMPERIAL DISSENT IN FRANCIS PARKMAN'S <i>THE OREGON TRAIL</i>	125
Counter-Imperial Opposition to the Mexican War.....	126
Manifest Destiny and Big Talk in <i>Oregon Trail</i>	142
Runaways: Slavery and Soldiering in <i>Oregon Trail</i>	160

CHAPTER	Page
“Fool Enough to Go Atrottin”: Tête Rouge and Volunteerism in <i>Oregon Trail</i>	171
IV MELVILLE AND AMERICA’S AMBIVALENT RESPONSE	
TO THE WEST.....	179
<i>Typee</i> and Manifest Destiny.....	181
Goldfields and Indians: Skepticism and Counter-Imperial Dissent in “Mr. Parkman’s Tour”.....	192
<i>Moby-Dick</i> and the Hunt.....	211
V CONCLUSION.....	253
WORKS CITED.....	261
VITA.....	277

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Early in Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* (1985) a reflective moment occurs that reveals ambivalences at the heart of the United States' narrated western experience. As the two central characters, Augustus "Gus" McCrae and Woodrow F. Call, consider undertaking an arduous cattle drive from Texas to "unbroken" Montana, they briefly debate the purpose and merit of their past service with the Texas Rangers. When Call argues that they protected innocent settlers from being slaughtered by Indians and Mexican bandits, the compulsively outspoken McCrae maintains that the violence they committed as Rangers at bottom served the interests of bankers, lawyers, and other opportunistic figures for whom "women and children and settlers are just cannon fodder," and who will inevitably follow in their wake to Montana as well. "The first ones to get there," McCrae quips, "will hire you to go hang all the horsethieves, and bring in whichever Indians have got the most fight left, and you'll do it and the place will be civilized." With the chapter fading out, McMurtry invites readers to join Call in thinking: "Sometimes Gus sang a strange tune. He had killed as many Indians as any Ranger, and had seen enough of their butchery that you'd think he knew why he was doing it; *and yet when he talked he seemed to be on their side*" (83-84, my emphasis). Call's confusion here is certainly understandable. Inasmuch as neither Call nor the

This dissertation follows the style of *Western American Literature*.

broader framework of *Lonesome Dove* represents McCrae as a rank hypocrite, then how can he play a leading role towards the establishment of Montana territory's first cattle ranching enterprise, while at the same time criticizing the spread of Anglo-American civilization across the western frontier?

Despite its illogic, the eloquence and frequency of McCrae's critical rhetoric make it virtually impossible for readers to dismiss it out of hand. Throughout the novel he disparages what he considers the Anglo-Americans' base commodification of the western frontier, and verbally indicts their unjust treatment of Native Americans and Mexicans, as well as of the Anglo-Americans operating outside the mainstream sociopolitical institutions. Early into their journey, for instance, he points out the arbitrary and hypocritical nature of property law in the West: "It's a funny life [. . .] All these cattle and nine-tenths of the horses is stolen, and yet we was once respected lawmen. If we get to Montana we'll have to go into politics. You'll wind up governor if the dern place ever gets to be a state. And you'll spend all your time passing laws against cattle thieves" (238). And after being mortally wounded in a skirmish with Indians, McCrae strikes a poignantly self-incriminating note in rejecting Call's offer to avenge him: "Oh, no, Woodrow [. . .] We won more than our share with the natives. They didn't invite us here, you know. We got no call to be vengeful" (879). By the moment of Gus McCrae's death, which takes place shortly after he makes this latter observation, *Lonesome Dove* develops a major motif out of the conflict between his counter-imperial impulses and the conquest ideologies with which he remains fully and knowingly implicated.

While this tension reveals *Lonesome Dove*'s disruptive engagement with the American West, such a critical interpretation has proven difficult to reconcile with the heroic grounds of the novel's appeal among readers, as well as among viewers of the 1989 television miniseries. In his Introduction to *Reading the West: New Essays on the Literature of the American West* (1996), Michael Kowalewski complains of the *Lonesome Dove* miniseries: "Though McMurtry refused to glorify the West, stressing an unheroic trail-drive full of snakebite and personal grievances, his antimythic efforts served only to reinforce the legendary aspects of the film. The more credible his characters were, the more they seemed larger than life. *Lonesome Dove* was an anti-western that was heroic in spite of itself" (3). Along similar lines, John Miller-Pullenhage has written that "[a]rguably, *Lonesome Dove* fails to work as McMurtry would wish," and places responsibility on the "many readers" who, rather than "reading his novel as ironically commandeering the genre's stale formulae [. . .] embraced a successful writer's succumbing to the power of the old stories" (76). And as Miller-Pullenhage emphasizes at some length, McMurtry has more than once registered his own disagreement with readers' responses to the novel. "I thought of *Lonesome Dove* as demythicizing," he wrote in *Walter Benjamin*, adding: "but instead it became a kind of American Arthuriad [. . .] Readers don't want to know and can't be made to see how difficult and destructive life in the Old West really was. Lies about the West are more important to them than truths" (55).¹

More than any device in *Lonesome Dove*, it is Gus McCrae's talk that most approaches the "demythicizing" work that McMurtry claims to have performed.²

McCrae's running sociopolitical commentaries can appear to constitute an anti-triumphalist perspective on the United States' "winning of the West"—even as the text surrounding these dialogic effusions encourages readers to vicariously sport huge guns, slaughter buffalo, battle Indians, and generally clear a path for the development of Anglo-American civilization. Given the novel's inarguably romantic reception by a popular audience, it is worth considering the extent to which McCrae's talk, by articulating a forcefully critical awareness of the practical and moral dilemmas surrounding frontier expansion, lends to those dilemmas a persuasive veneer of resolution that ironically—and, it would seem, contra McMurtry's intentions—winds up reinforcing the novel's mainline triumphalist thrust.

Here I want to suggest that by reflecting pejoratively upon westward expansion while at the same time essentially promoting it, *Lonesome Dove* rehearses a methodological approach that has proven inextricable from the United States' self-narrated frontier experience. Indeed, this dissertation will argue that such rhetorical double-dealing reflects a critically underemphasized, foundational methodology through which frontier writings have historically facilitated a more comfortable engagement with United States imperialism. Beginning with its early nineteenth-century emergence as a popular genre, frontier literatures elide categorical distinctions between "high" and "low"—as well as the somewhat more easily located boundary between fiction and nonfiction—by virtue of a shared investment in negotiating counter-imperial impulses.

The American West and Ideological Conflict

Methods by which dialectical conflicts in literary texts reflect broader cultural efforts to resolve ideological divisions have of course been addressed by numerous critics of American literature. Perhaps the most influential study of this issue to date is Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (1993), which argues that the United States' literary canon is primarily composed of authors who were "radical in a representative way that *reaffirmed* the culture, rather than undermining it" (365). More relevant to my particular focus on westward expansion is Lucy Maddox's *Removals: Nineteenth Century Literature & the Politics of Indian Affairs* (1991), which I engage throughout this dissertation. In her Introduction, Maddox acknowledges that politicians and authors sought to de-escalate tensions stemming from Indian Removal; to this end, she argues, they established "what we might now call a master narrative, a discourse that would eliminate or submerge oppositions through new rhetorical arrangements and new definitions" (8). But whereas Maddox persistently denies substantive credence to the oppositional discourses that she describes—maintaining instead that the overarching terms of debate over Indian Removal were inherently imperialistic—I emphasize appropriations of the counter-imperial impulse as a necessary means of negotiating meaningful ideological conflict over a range of expansion-related issues.³

Focusing upon what I term "Big Talk," this dissertation examines the means by which antebellum literatures of the western frontier play out tensions between predominant ideologies of conquest and extant counter-imperial modes of conceiving

national identity. While my project necessarily acknowledges frontier literature's role in facilitating antebellum-era registers of Anglo-American triumphalism—such as white racial superiority, calls of adventure and economic enterprise, and, increasingly, “Manifest Destiny”—I highlight the counter-narratives that operate on or beneath the surface of that literature, enhancing its rhetorical force. Following James Fenimore Cooper's rise to celebrity status in the 1820s, the antebellum western imagination teems with fictional antecedents for *Lonesome Dove*'s Gus McCrae—charismatic, exaggeratedly verbose characters whose activities in fundamental ways align with United States expansionist doctrine, but who at the same time persistently ventriloquize concerns over economic exploitation, environmental recklessness, and the violent displacement of racial and international Others.

While such big-talking personae in antebellum frontier fiction receive significant attention in this chapter and throughout the dissertation, I am equally concerned with the degree to which contemporaneous nonfiction works—particularly travel writings—enlist similarly loquacious narrators to engage and dispel objections to expansionist doctrine. During the 1830s and 1840s in particular, male and female travel writers of the West framed their narratives in ways that imply an inextricable association between expansionist doctrine and Anglo-American identity; thus, much like their fictional counterparts, the personae at the center of antebellum frontier travel literatures both reflect and perpetuate triumphalist discourse. Nonetheless, in conceiving their immediate engagement with unfamiliar landscapes and peoples, these narrators also

interweave counter-imperial registers and memes into their mainline triumphalist narratives.

Representative of how this appropriative process tended to play out in antebellum travel literatures is Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), which obtained enough purchase with contemporary audiences to resuscitate the author's floundering literary career, and marked for him the beginning of a prolonged investment in the literary West.⁴ *A Tour on the Prairies* relates Irving's travels with a federal Indian commissioner as far west as Kansas and Oklahoma, with the purpose of delivering orders from President Andrew Jackson to tribes inhabiting those outlying territories. Irving's narrative not only reverberates with misgivings over the abuse of Native Americans by white settlers and the federal government,⁵ but also expresses concern for expansion's impact on the natural environment. There are places where he borders on moralistic outrage at expansion's destructive impact on the frontier; for example, closing out his description of a scene in which one of his companions violently breaks a wild horse, Irving tells readers:

I could not but look with compassion upon this fine young animal, whose whole course of existence had been so suddenly reversed. From being a denizen of these vast pastures, ranging at will from plain to plain and mead to mead, cropping of every herb and flower, and drinking of every stream, he was suddenly reduced to perpetual and painful servitude, to pass his life under the harness and the curb, amid, perhaps, the din and

dust and drudgery of cities. The transition in his lot was such as sometimes takes place in human affairs, and in the fortunes of towering individuals:—one day, a prince of the prairies—the next day, a pack-horse! (122)

While Irving here registers a strong oppositional sensibility to the spectacle he witnesses, the passage, of course, hardly rises to the level of sustained argumentation. It is significant that immediately following his lament for the “prince of the prairies,” he begins a new chapter with the dispassionate and forward-moving declarative: “We left the camp of the wild horse about a quarter before eight” (123). Looked at one way, Irving’s perfunctory outburst on behalf of a wild animal (as with his frequent gestures of transcultural sympathy for the Indians occupying the territories his party traverses) only leaves him open to charges of hollowness and hypocrisy. But the double-dealing quality of this and numerous similar moments in the text quite arguably forms the primary basis of their appeal for readers at the moment of Irving’s publication; such passages operate as spaces in which antebellum white Americans might earnestly lament as “unfortunate” or “inevitable” the dilemmas and transgressions posed by westward expansion, and attain a tacit regret for their continuing complicity in the process.⁶

The need to achieve such a conflicted balance—however apparently superficial—between conquest ideology on the one hand and counter-imperial impulses on the other, obtained an increasingly dramatic urgency during the anxiety-ridden antebellum era. In this dissertation I hope to demonstrate the wealth of possibility

afforded by considering antebellum frontier literatures in light of longstanding debates over the moral parameters of the United States' westward march. By no means do all the big talkers I examine find themselves in agreement. The argumentative thrust of Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, for example, operates in strong opposition to the triumphalism pervading Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*; and neither of these works approach the idea of the West from the same political vantage point or with the same set of aesthetic concerns as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. But each of the texts examined here reflects the deeply conflicted nature of the antebellum United States' western experience.

Although literary subsumings of the counter-imperial impulse constitute an organizing motif in "Big Talk," the crux of my argument involves enlisting representative frontier literatures to emphasize the presence of this impulse in the first place—and by extension to arrive at a clearer understanding of its operation and significance in the antebellum American discourse. Leading up to and during its climactic period between 1843 and 1851,⁷ American expansionism hardly represented a monolithically-held article of national faith, but rather had to be repeatedly justified and repackaged by presidents and members of Congress, through carefully crafted Supreme Court decisions, and in editorial pages of leading papers across the North and South alike. Conversely, numerous social reformers, politicians, journalists, and literary authors throughout the country rose to prominence by forcefully articulating extant oppositional arguments not only in relation to slavery, but also to environmental

recklessness, Indian Removal, and an aggressive program of territorial expansion that triggered war with Mexico, and very nearly incited another war with Great Britain.

In exploring manifestations of the counter-imperial impulse in antebellum frontier literatures, this dissertation seeks to address two critical gaps in the continuing conversation about the antebellum American response to the West. First, I seek to contribute to a growing, but in many ways nascent, critical apprehension of the West's enormous influence on authors and literary circles typically associated with Northeastern and mid-Atlantic literary hubs. Such a geographical reorientation, I suggest, dovetails with recent movements towards foregrounding the international scope of nineteenth-century American literature more generally.⁸ If the primary texts I examine strongly reveal the American West—both as it was imagined and experienced—to be a site inextricably woven into popularly-held anxieties regarding racial and international Others, the western frontier carried explicitly international connotations in the nineteenth-century American mind. As Howard Doughty argued in his 1962 biography of Francis Parkman, there obtained a “shared experience” between the United States’ expansionist program and “the whole expansionist phase of European culture, as its ‘radiation’ on a world-wide scale brought it into contact—usually destructive—with cultures of a different nature and induced a more searching scrutiny of its own values” (118). Similarly, on a more immediate practical level, antebellum-era advocates for an aggressive expansionist program persistently made their case to the public by raising the specter of European powers encroaching on a vulnerable American frontier. As F. P. Prucha pointed out in his 1969 apologia for Jackson’s conduct towards the Indian, the

President consistently promoted and defended his Removal policies less through anti-Indian rhetoric than by appealing to Americans' widespread fear of European imperialism.⁹

Second, and more importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, the counter-imperial impulse to date remains starkly underrepresented in the study of nineteenth-century American literature. As of yet, there has emerged no treatment of ideologically oppositional discourses on a par, for example, with signature studies such as Richard Slotkin's three-volume interrogation of United States' imperialism's underpinning myths, or with Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease's deeply influential collection, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993). This critical disproportion is to an extent understandable, given the facts of westward expansion, and the United States' increasingly aggressive role on the international stage across the twentieth century and into our own moment; and by the same token, the act of engaging a given historical arc by definition risks "disappearing" failed sites of opposition to ultimately prevailing discourses, events, and developments. At the same time, however, critics' sustained downplaying of antebellum counter-imperial impulses also seems in part reflective of a broad trend over the last several decades, to approach the United States' history as a kind of morality play in which an overwhelmingly racist and imperialist political past is placed in service as a foil for current standards of enlightenment and political progressivism.¹⁰

But ironically, a more cogent understanding of current-era counter-imperial politics stands to be activated through recovering lines of dissent from the nation's

turbulent past. In truth, manifestations of United States imperialism during the antebellum period, as in our own, reflect complicated sets of circumstance that cannot be adequately addressed without reference to the oppositional sensibilities, discourses, and visions that they repeatedly evoked. As I will emphasize throughout, negative associations and hotbutton debate fundamentally informed the American public's response to emblematic markers of expansion, including the Indian Removal Act of 1830, *Worcester v Georgia* (1832), the Cherokee Trail of Tears (1838), the "Oregon Question," the depletion of the buffalo herds, the Mexican War, the Compromise of 1850, and the California Gold Rush of 1849. These and numerous other issues, taken together with the increasingly transcendent crisis posed by slavery, all exposed the ideological divisions at the heart of the antebellum nation's westward march.

In such a climate, justificatory discourses could not attenuate counter-imperial impulses by simply ignoring them, but rather, had to appropriate those impulses in ways that relegated them to the marginal status of a sentimental sigh. Frontier literatures played a prominent role in this displacement, primarily by virtue of their unique capacity for aestheticizing both the whiteness and (in view of possible European encroachments) the continental nativism of American civilization. If opposition to expansionist doctrine threatened to undermine the affectation of a unified white American citizenry in the area of foreign policy, frontier literatures were well positioned to attenuate this threat by shifting the grounds of debate. Thus, in many of the representative works examined here, quite often what appears to be at stake is less the moral ramifications of conquest ideology than the potential for (as well as the desirability of) peaceably assimilating

unfamiliar landscapes and peoples into a nationalist vision that both presupposed and celebrated white continental dominance.

As much as is possible, “Big Talk” seeks to engage a white antebellum American public on its own terms as an ideologically diverse population fraught with anxieties over the meaning and consequences of westward expansion. With that end in mind, the section of my Introduction that follows conducts a broad sketch of the arguments that continue to dominate critical representations of the ideological underpinnings of antebellum expansion. I argue that critical discourses have in many ways codified a totalizing portrait of nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans as, in the words of historian Richard White, “loudly and proudly racist” (74), and thus on the whole sanguine towards the epistemic and moral dilemmas attending the nation’s expansionist enterprise. I elaborate on my point that the ideological contestations surrounding these dilemmas have been largely elided by treatments invested in presenting the nineteenth-century literary frontier as a site for playing out what Annette Kolodny has memorably termed the “psychosexual dramas of men intent on possessing a virgin continent” (*The Land Before Her* xiii).

Moreover, I suggest that in interrogating methodologies by which antebellum frontier writers both reflected and actively promoted contemporary ideologies of conquest, influential critics such as Kolodny, Slotkin, and Lucy Maddox implicitly reveal the base functionality of such methodologies as instruments of *appeal*. Identifying ways in which frontier literatures have reinforced (or even created outright) associations of westward expansion with white racial superiority, heroic self-

determination, and the fulfillment of national destiny, after all, is tantamount to acknowledging a persistent degree of public resistance to accepting these constructs in the first place. In her recent essay “*Moby-Dick* and the War on Terror” (2007), Carolyn Karcher touches on the political ramifications such an acknowledgment might obtain in our own moment; studying Ahab’s methods of overcoming resistance among the *Pequod* crew, Karcher argues, illuminates “how the politics of fear has served to cow dissenters into silence and frighten humane, thinking people into supporting the war on terror” (312). As I will emphasize throughout my dissertation, however, no less than in relation to the slavery debate, momentous issues such as Indian Removal and the Mexican War involved a cacophony of dissenters that were neither “cowed” nor “frightened” into supporting what they considered to be an anti-republican, imperialist enterprise.

Recovering the United States’ Counter-Imperial Impulse

In ascribing much of the readerly appeal of antebellum frontier literatures to their capacity for assuaging anxiety and bringing a sense of resolution to politically explosive issues, my discussion seeks to complicate a literary and historical scholarship that continues to lend an ironic credence to the galvanizing vision of the West that has long been known as the “Turner Thesis.” In an 1893 address to the American Historical Association, historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented his famous argument that the experience of frontier expansion (and not an Anglo-Saxon “germ” communicated by immigration to the New World) gave rise to the United States’ unique identity as a

ruggedly individualistic nation, shaped the evolution of its republican institutions, and generally “explain[ed] American development” (1). Rhapsodized Turner:

This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, but the Great West. Even the slavery struggle [. . .] occupies its important place in American history because of its relation to westward expansion. In this advance, the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization [. . .] never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves. For a moment, at the frontier, the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant.
(*The Frontier in American History* 2-3, 37-38)

Turner concluded his paper with the elegiac observation that, with the United States having fully extended itself from coast to North American coast, “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history” (681). Conspicuously absent from the “Turner Thesis” is any recognition of the ideological contestations bred by westward expansion. Indeed, notwithstanding his passing reference to the “slavery struggle,” Turner’s depiction projects a remarkable degree of agreement that in many ways continues to inform both popular and academic representations of the era of

Manifest Destiny.¹¹ It is perhaps in no small measure due to Turner's nostalgic portrait of an experience-based American consensus that, as Phillip Burnham has observed: "Radically qualified, if not rejected, by revisionist historians today," the argument he advanced "still has a hold on the public imagination" (199).

But while it is certainly true that historians and literary critics have long "rejected" Turner's triumphalist argument, much of the academic discussion has—in a way that oddly mirrors the popular imagination that Burnham interrogates—continued to elide Americans' conflicted response to westward expansion while it was actually taking place. A multi-tiered and revealing illustration of the degree to which the "Turner Thesis" continues to overarch popular and academic treatments of the American West appears in historian Patricia Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest* (1987), when she bookends John F. Kennedy's famous acceptance speech at the 1960 Democratic convention with Ronald Reagan's 1985 Inaugural Address to the American people. Both politicians, Limerick notes, traded heavily in metaphors of the western frontier to communicate a galvanizing American narrative impelled by a sense of opportunity and patriotic pride (323-324). The latter speech she finds especially troubling, due to its chronological immediacy. Proclaimed Reagan in that Address: "[T]he men of the Alamo call out encouragement to each other; a settler pushes west and sings his song, and the song echoes out forever and fills the unknowing air. It is the American sound: it is hopeful, bighearted, idealistic—daring, decent, and fair. That's our heritage, that's our song. We sing it still. For all our problems, our differences, we are together as of old" (324).

Given the epideictic nature of his speech, it is perhaps unsurprising that Reagan evoked the West's most glowing associations in the popular American mind; like Turner nearly a century before him, he enlisted the nostalgic connotations of a "bygone era" to highlight the desirability of carving out a new, similarly optimistic and unifying phase of the United States' trajectory. But Reagan's speech, Limerick argues, manifested the principal dilemma that continues to frustrate scholarly analyses of the American West. After some twenty-five years of academics deconstructing the Turnerian model from a number of theoretical angles, she complains:

[Reagan's] image of Western history was still ethnocentric and tied to a simple notion of progress [. . .] 'In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow'; 'We believed then and now there are no limits to growth and human progress when men and women are free to follow their dreams.' *Much of the address in fact paraphrased mid-nineteenth century articles of faith.* Professional Western historians explored conflict, unintended consequences, and complexities in Western history. Presidents continued to see only freedom, opportunity, abundance, and success in the same story" (324, my emphasis).

Herself one of the "Professional Western historians" she describes, Limerick's emphasis on the wide gap between popular and academic understandings of the subject is certainly well-taken; and undoubtedly, it is a gap which, some twenty years after the publication

of *Legacy of Conquest*, remains a point of concern in the historical and literary disciplines alike. But at the same time, the above-quoted passage also reflects a teleological clarity that Limerick otherwise rejects in a book much concerned with identifying recurrent patterns. While President Reagan omitted the problematics at the center of current scholarly understandings of the American West, terminologies such as “mid-nineteenth century articles of faith” similarly assume a distorted degree of ideological homogeneity on the part of Americans from an earlier era. In truth, antebellum Americans’ acute awareness of the “conflict, unintended consequences, and complexities” attending westward expansion only reinforces the poignancy of Limerick’s subtitle, *The Unbroken Past of the American West*.¹²

If academic treatments have tended towards projecting an ideologically hegemonic nineteenth-century Anglo-American populace—which in turn serves as an odious foil for advancing current political concerns centered on problematical constructs including gender, race, and nationhood—this jaundiced view of history occasionally informs the popular political discourse as well.¹³ In his speech at the 2008 Democratic convention in Denver, for instance, former Vice President Al Gore made a sharp critical reference to the United States’ expansionist phase—but with a purpose markedly different from that of the politicians on whom Limerick focuses. Praising Abraham Lincoln’s opposition to the Mexican-American War, Gore drew an unflattering analogy between that conflict and the United States’ current occupation of Iraq. “Before he entered the White House,” Gore stated, “Abraham Lincoln’s experience in elective office consisted of eight years in his state legislature in Springfield, Illinois, and one term in

Congress—during which he showed the courage and wisdom to oppose the invasion of another country that was popular when it started but later condemned by history” (transcript excerpted from the *Huffington Post*). Playing up the image of Lincoln as a bastion of “courage and wisdom,” Gore communicated an exaggerated level of American enthusiasm for the invasion of Mexico. As I will discuss throughout this dissertation and particularly emphasize in Chapter III, while the war obtained loud and copious support in the beginning, it just as immediately gave rise to a culture-wide, multi-faceted, and vociferous oppositional movement that included numerous high-profile government officials from both major parties, and that significantly impacted the frontier literatures that were written and published during the war years.

Gore’s brief remark about Americans’ response to the Mexican War is in a sense reflective of a literary criticism that, while rightly condemning the moral transgressions attending westward expansion, too often overlooks similar condemnations that expansion evoked in its own moment. Probably no work of literary criticism has proven more influential in terms of thus downplaying the antebellum counter-imperial impulse than Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973). Operating from the poignantly-stated premise that “myths reach out to cripple, incapacitate, or strike down the living” (5), Slotkin’s book demonstrates how mythologies of the American frontier originated with the earliest Puritan settlers, and coalesced into their most recognizable narrative form beginning with John Filson’s lionization of Daniel Boone in 1784. Building off of Turner’s perception of the western frontier as the “meeting point between savagery and [Anglo-American] civilization,” Slotkin shows how the Boone narrative

set the stage for a nineteenth century literature impelled by a romanticized eradication of the Other, and argues that “regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience” (5).

Slotkin’s work has proven an indispensable guide for historians and literary critics interested in the United States’ narrated frontier experience, as well as in the continuing impact of that narrative on the twentieth and twenty-first century cultural-political scene.¹⁴ Yet *Regeneration Through Violence* also forwards a deceptively exaggerated thesis in its insisted-upon, direct correlations between Anglo-American identity, territorial conquest, and racially-coded violence. In his depiction of a nineteenth-century American culture for the most part unquestioningly partaking of a mythic identification with violent conquest, Slotkin—notwithstanding his ideological elevation of a select few literary artists—almost entirely omits from his equation the presence of oppositional voices and impulses. Slotkin’s painstaking investigation, however, in itself powerfully suggests the need for an overriding narrative apparatus to overcome sub-surface but ineradicable elements of counter-imperial resistance.

Regeneration Through Violence is both foundational to and emblematic of a critical approach that, while underwriting the idea of Anglo-American triumphalism as a fundamentally stable “nineteenth century article of faith,” nevertheless implicitly acknowledges that conquest ideologies had to be promoted and maintained through an intricate system of mythological and rhetorical constructs. For example, in a scathing treatment of *The Pioneers* that appeared in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Eric Cheyfitz writes:

Western imperialism, and perhaps this is true of all imperialisms, founds its program on the disappearance of the “other.” This of course necessitates the construction of others as an absolutely oppositional, completely homogenous, and ultimately superfluous figure, rather than as figures in a possible dialogue of equals, figures with which one is implicated. *It is the work of an imperial culture to accomplish this construction over and against resistance to this work* [. . .] (109, my emphasis)

Asserting a formulation that pits “Western imperialism” against the racial and international Other, Cheyfitz sets in motion a binary logic that cannot account—to cite the examples most pertinent to Cooper’s subject matter—for the varied and oft-oppositional perspectives that informed antebellum Anglo-Americans’ experience with the landscape and indigenous peoples of the western frontier. Indeed, to the extent that Cheyfitz is right that “all imperialisms” depend upon projecting a false homogeneity onto the racial and international Other, the converse is also true: that is, Cheyfitz’s model projects an equally fallacious degree of ideological unanimity onto cultures engaged in imperialistic activity.

Such a projection onto antebellum Americans’ ideological response to westward expansion informs the recent work of a number of historians and literary critics addressing the seminal events, economic issues, and cultural trends surrounding expansion. Richard Drinnon’s *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating &*

Empire Building (1997),¹⁵ whose title invokes the most famous chapter from Melville's *Confidence Man*, argues that the United States' twentieth-century military ventures abroad precisely reflect, in conventionally-updated forms, a murderous nineteenth-century attitude towards—and equally murderous mode of representing—Others including African-Americans, Native Americans, and Mexicans. Shelly Streeby's *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (2002) examines popular literatures published during and around the Mexican War and argues that “class and racial formations and popular and mass culture in Northeastern U.S. cities are inextricable from scenes of empire-building in the U.S. West, Mexico, and the Americas” (15); treating a range of war-era novels and poems that represent idealized white American males as chivalrous “liberators” of feminized Mexicans, *American Sensations* builds its narrative around an “American 1848” that near-monolithically conflated its national identity with a belief in white racial superiority. Historian Richard White's *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (1991), which in many ways builds off of Limerick's work, opens with a bemused reminder that pre-Europeanized North America “was, after all, not empty” (4), and proceeds to exhaustively chronicle Anglo-Americans' pattern of westward-marching assault on racial and international Others, as well as on the natural environment. White especially emphasizes the federal government's determinative role in establishing a continental hegemony keyed by the translation of open and/or communally-held lands into private wealth.

Three critical texts that I engage throughout this dissertation have more subtly contributed to eliding the counter-imperial opposition that troubled the American discourse during the era of Manifest Destiny. First, Robert Johannsen's excellent study of the Mexican War, *To the Halls of the Montezumas* (1985), demonstrates the patriotic zeal that predominated in the war years and significantly shaped a range of communicative media including the popular press, historical and scientific scholarship, the literary establishment, and the fine arts. But Johannsen indirectly points up the antebellum counter-imperial impulse by emphasizing the extent to which these media effectively persuaded citizens to embrace the United States' first official invasion of a foreign country. In a variety of ways, *To the Halls* reveals persistent negotiations between imperialistic discourses and counter-imperial argumentation; perhaps the most vivid example is Johannsen's documentation of soldiers' and journalists' seemingly compulsive use of the phrase "seeing the elephant"—a trope for dispelling romantic notions about the United States' invasion of Mexico, and instead acknowledging the ugly realities of the war. "The phrase, in its common usage," writes Johannsen, "often went beyond disappointment to encompass any new, broadening, even frightening, experience, *without necessarily suggesting a negative quality*" (87, my emphasis). Here Johannsen touches upon the Big Talk through which American authors and readers alike vented deep misgivings while still preserving the romantic thrust of their western narratives.

A different kind of antebellum-era ideological hegemony is suggested by Kolodny's *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers*,

1630-1860 (1984). Kolodny's book deservedly remains one of the most influential contributions to American literary criticism, inasmuch as it foregrounds several female-authored frontier literatures previously relegated to the canonical margins, and remains indispensable to current ecocritical treatments of the literary frontier. While Kolodny conducts a compelling analysis of representative texts, however, I depart from her rigidly gendered conception of the parameters of antebellum, frontier writing; this conception begins with her Preface, which brazenly asserts an "absence of adventurous conquest in women's fantasies before 1860" that is unfortunately paralleled by "men's incapacity to fantasize tending the garden" (xiii).¹⁶ A survey of the literary and political discourses from the antebellum era reveals that male authors of the frontier hardly reflect such monolithic adherence to fantasies centered on conquering unfamiliar territories and peoples; similarly, female authors from the same period hardly proved immune to romanticizing the conquest and subjugation of the western frontier and its indigenous peoples.

As noted above, one of the most prevailing influences on my work here is Lucy Maddox's *Removals*, which indeed engages many of the same literary authors with whom "Big Talk" is concerned. In the first chapter of *Removals*, Maddox succinctly reminds us that the question of Indian Removal gave rise to a "sense of crisis [that] was not limited to the Congress and the courts; the fate of the Cherokees," continues Maddox, "and of other Indians east of the Mississippi, was the subject of intense debate in newspapers and magazines of every political persuasion" (15). Maddox provides an indispensable sketch of the major figures who drove that debate, and of the terms of its

operation within popular and political antebellum discourses. But throughout her study, she also follows the lead of Slotkin, Drinnon, and others in performing a near-total dismissal of the ideological substance that informed opposition to the United States' Indian Removal policies, and similarly trivializes opposition that emerged in response to literary attacks on the character and/or humanity of Native American peoples.

In joining together oppositional discourses regarding Indian Removal policy and those that emerged in protest of the United States' invasion of Mexico, I am not denying the important distinctions to be made in terms of how antebellum Americans perceived these separate issues. As I note in Chapter III, for example, one often-cited complaint that was unique to the Mexican War involved its exacerbation of anti-Catholic bigotry. And whereas there existed more or less (tacit) agreement that Mexico constituted a "nation," much of the justification for Indian Removal had long hinged upon Native Americans' official designation as individuated "tribes," most of which were represented as perpetually on the move and thus definitively unconnected to any one particular piece of ground (Maddox 9). Yet the subjugation and continuing westward removal of Native Americans in many ways set the stage for the United States' conquest of northern Mexico. Conversely, just as territorial expansion (whether in Georgia or in California) was consistently represented by proponents as a vehicle of republican liberation and benign protection (not only of the lands in question but also of peoples in the very process of being conquered), it was equally the case that rhetorics decrying the Indians' plight easily translated into arguments opposing the Mexican War.

The disruptive potential posed by the Indian Removal controversy was greatly exacerbated by the United States' entrance into war with Mexico. And as the rhetorics deployed by William Lloyd Garrison, David Lee Child, Abby Kelley Foster, and other radical abolitionists at mid-century poignantly reveal, counter-imperial opposition evoked by both of these issues thematically dovetailed with the slavery debate's increasing rise to dominance over the cultural and political landscape. In his 1973 study *Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848*, historian John H. Schroeder succinctly notes that for many Americans in the 1840s, the Mexican War substantiated long-developing fears that "the democratic virtue and idealism of an earlier age had now been swept aside by a tide of pervasive materialism, grasping expansionism, and proslavery politics [. . .] [D]isgusting as it alone was, the Mexican War was only symptomatic of much deeper and more destructive currents which threatened American society" (115-116). More recently, in *A Short, Offhand Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War* (2002), Paul Foos has pointed out that despite the racism that pervaded midcentury America, it was nevertheless true that "[t]he naked opportunism of the 1846-1848 war, the class conflict that the army brought with it to Mexico, and face-to-face experience with the Mexican people would bring about changed racial thinking: some individuals and groups became more exploitative than ever, but others rejected the cant of racial destiny" (5). A fuller appreciation of the antebellum period necessitates acknowledging that the "cant" to which Foos refers—and which has been copiously highlighted by numerous critical engagements with nineteenth-century American literature—met with vociferous

opposition by many Anglo-American religious reformers, government officials, journalists, literary artists and (as Foos demonstrates) soldiers.

If westward expansion's destructive impact on the racial and international Other persistently troubled nineteenth-century Americans' sense of their national identity and direction, the ecological recklessness endemic to that process evoked similar and related anxieties. Kolodny's narrative of male nineteenth-century frontier travelers bent on ecological conquest and despoliation omits the eco-consciousness, for example, of a figure such as Lieutenant James W. Albert. In an 1847 diary entry written while mapping New Mexico for the United States Army, Albert reflects:

It seems so shameful, [what is happening to] these wide pasture grounds that the Great Being has planted for the wild beasts of the prairies. Well may the Indians look with hatred on those who go about spreading desolation. This winter, the buffalo have almost deserted the river, there is no grass for them; and the poor Indian, forced by the cold season to take refuge in the timber that alone grows on the streams, must now travel far away from the village to get meat enough for his subsistence. There should be a law to protect these noble pasture grounds.¹⁷ (quoted in Sachs 19)

The sensibilities Albert here articulates were hardly unfamiliar to antebellum Americans, and at several points in this dissertation I suggest that the ecocritical discourses that

inform many frontier literatures from the period stand to gain appreciably more attention in future scholarship. Indeed, works ranging from *The Pioneers* to *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* to *Moby-Dick* in many ways fully anticipate current arguments that decry commodity-driven environmental depletionism, and emphasize an increasingly pressing need to achieve more environmentally-sustainable modes of community existence.

The longstanding and internationally-informed tradition of American environmentalist rhetoric has been recently emphasized by Aaron Sachs in *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (2006), which demonstrates German scientist and environmental advocate Alexander von Humboldt's enormous influence on the nineteenth-century American mind. Sachs' treatment of Humboldt's work and influence, moreover, touches on the inextricable relationship between counter-imperial and environmentalist concerns. Early in the book, in a paragraph immediately following his observation that "[n]ot all Americans were converts to the idea of unbridled white expansion [. . .] to some radicals and even some moderates, Indians were not savage 'Others' but potential members of a new, diverse society, crucial parts of a Humboldtian whole" Sachs writes that:

Direct contact with different cultures and new environments could have an unpredictable effect on people [. . .] You might encounter swirling dust storms, malarial bogs, swarms of insects; you might find sweet-water springs, edible roots, natural shelters. Amid these conditions, nineteenth-century explorers, like many cosmopolitans before them, had to develop

new ways of living for months or years at a time and were often moved to reconsider old assumptions. They saw clear-cut forests and burned-out prairies and recognized the environmental impact of unconstrained enterprise. They breathed fresh air and learned [from Native Americans] about the Great Spirit and wondered if their compatriots back home had begun to worship smoke-belching factories. (19)

Both on a theoretical and a methodological level, Sachs's essentially anti-teleological treatment of environmentalist thought and activism, as well as his related excavation of oft-neglected discourses in the antebellum United States, significantly informs my own examination of the period's counter-imperial impulses.¹⁸

In examining ways in which antebellum literatures of the frontier both reflected and influenced broad-based anxieties over issues related to westward expansion, I am rejecting tendencies to isolate counter-imperial expressions of a select few literary authors or figures as evidence that they were somehow "ahead of their time." As David S. Reynolds has written in another context in *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1988): "The major writers were not, as is commonly believed, aliens in a literary culture of prudery or clear moral distinctions. Rather, they were responding to a heterogeneous culture which had strong elements of the criminal, the erotic, and the demonic [. . .] Throughout the major literature we witness a dialectical engagement with bizarre or sensational aspects of American culture" (169).¹⁹ Collapsing antebellum-era frontier literatures at the center of

the existing canon with those at or near the margins, I examine them as part of the United States' broader sociopolitical effort to negotiate counter imperial impulses during the age of Manifest Destiny. To set the stage for this examination in the chapters that follow, the final section of my Introduction will turn to a discussion of James Fenimore Cooper's third novel and the first of his "Leatherstocking tales," *The Pioneers* (1823). I suggest that this highly popular work of fiction anticipated a broad and enduring frontier writing enterprise invested in negotiating between prevailing ideologies of conquest and ineradicable counter-imperial impulses.

Big Talk and the Counter-Imperial Impulse in Cooper's *The Pioneers*

The Pioneers is populated with a gamut of opinionated and loquacious personae (including Cooper's ambivalent narrator), many of whom articulate forceful critiques of an expansionist program with which they are fully and knowingly complicit. I will particularly emphasize how Cooper enlists the novel's chief landowner and village patriarch, Judge Temple, to trade in rhetorics of meaningful counter-imperial opposition while also appropriating those rhetorics in ways that reinforce the text's mainline triumphalist thrust. While the chapters that follow repeatedly reference Cooper as a reflection of (and an important influence on) the antebellum United States' conflicted response to Indian Removal, in the discussion that follows here I limit my focus to *The Pioneers'* engagement with slavery and, more extensively, with the environmental depletionism that attended westward expansion. A number of critics have noted that beginning with *The Pioneers* and throughout his "Leatherstocking tales," Cooper's

historical fiction relies heavily on the rhetoric of inevitability to simultaneously lament and justify the Native Americans' dispossession by Anglo-Americans;²⁰ similarly, *The Pioneers*' approach to discourses surrounding slavery and the natural environment anticipates the increasingly sophisticated rhetorics that politicians, journalists, and frontier writers would develop over the next several decades, towards legitimizing and advancing expansionist doctrine.

While much of the criticism of *The Pioneers* foregrounds the ideologically-charged conflicts that take place between the novel's principal characters, less attention has been paid to the ideological instabilities and equivocations that trouble Judge Temple's character. Indeed, it remains a standard reading to suggest that, as Robert Spiller wrote in 1964: "The thematic structure of the novel comes into focus in the conflict, both personal and ideological, between Judge Temple and Natty Bumppo. These two idealized prototypes of real characters, both of whom Cooper admires and at the same time critically understands, admire and are critical of each other" (443). In this vein, discussion of *The Pioneers* often foregrounds ways in which, by playing out Bumppo's clash with Judge Temple over land use and property rights, Cooper weighs in on the stakes and meaning of America's progression from an ideology that (at least ostensibly) privileged man's natural rights to one grounded instead in the republican ideal of ordered liberty.²¹ Given the novel's structural contingency upon Bumppo's climactic violation of Temple's game hunting laws, the archetypal approach that Spiller describes is to an extent necessary, but it also risks overlooking the ideological conflict that Temple himself projects, in responding to frontier expansion. Temple's conflicted

delineation has of course not been lost on critical treatments of the novel. In *Early Cooper and His Audience* (1986), James D. Wallace notes that “for all his conservationist rhetoric, the Judge continually yields to ‘the excitement of the moment’ [. . .] and reveals himself as another waster and spender” (141). But while Wallace argues that the novel’s ironic portrait of Temple’s activities primarily serves to set up Natty Bumppo as an “alternative to his vision” (142), I am questioning the fundamental stability of Temple’s “vision” to begin with, and suggesting that the novel appropriates his expressed reservations in ways that facilitate the novel’s ultimately benign framing of expansionism.²²

While Temple unquestionably occupies the center of the expansionist program that *The Pioneers* dramatizes, he also functions as a primary and at times very compelling medium through which the novel expresses apprehension of the practical and moral dilemmas endemic to that program. Readers are cued in to Temple’s conflicted attitude towards expansion in the opening chapter, in relation to what by 1823 had already become the controversial issue of slavery on the frontier. Significantly, Cooper injects slavery into the text immediately after his opening salvo on the republican ideals his text is ostensibly in the business of heralding. Cooper writes in the long first paragraph: “In short, the whole district is hourly exhibiting how much can be done, in even a rugged country, and with a severe climate, under the dominion of mild laws, and where every man feels a direct interest in the prosperity of a commonwealth of which he knows himself to form a part” (13-14). Yet given the sociopolitical model which this and numerous other passages throughout the novel celebrates, it is noteworthy that the

first character *The Pioneers* introduces—and thus its first human signifier of westward expansion—is not a lionized Anglo-American frontier settler, but rather Agamemnon, a slave. Moreover, shortly after Aggy’s introduction, his presence brings an added element of political disturbance into the first of the text’s many property disputes. With Temple and the mysterious Oliver Edwards each claiming credit for felling a deer that has bounded into their mutual path, Temple suggests that the matter be put to a vote among the onlookers, and good-naturedly remarks, “[t]here is Aggy; he can’t vote, being a slave” (22).

Though rendered apparently innocuous by the scene’s larger project of setting up relationships among *The Pioneers*’ major players, the controversial embeddings of Temple’s remark would not have been lost on Cooper’s contemporary readership. Indeed, here Temple poignantly reflects an already-emergent, early nineteenth-century tension between America’s imagined frontier as a site for the spread of republican liberty, and expansion’s associations with the furtherance of slavery. The importance of reconciling this tension is thrown sharply into relief when Cooper tells readers: “Owing to the religious scruples of the Judge,” Aggy technically belongs to Richard Jones, Temple’s cousin and Sheriff of the town. Temple’s *de facto* ownership of Aggy, however, is emphasized in the next sentence, when Cooper writes: “But when any dispute between his lawful and his *real master* occurred, the black felt too much deference for both to express any opinion” (51, my emphasis). This equivocal treatment of slavery on an expanding frontier reflects an 1823 American political climate already embroiled in controversies bred by the issue.²³ Indeed, appearing in print only three

years after the Missouri Compromise, Temple's effort to rhetorically dodge the meaning of slavery's presence in his community cannot be read out of the context of the increasing national divide over the institution's relationship to westward expansion.

It is true that much of the debate surrounding the Missouri Compromise involved—as would the slavery discourses throughout the antebellum period—strong contingents of Northern racism, as well as the nascent stage of a nineteenth-century Free Soil movement that, over the next several decades, would oppose slavery's extension less on moral grounds than as a means of defending the prerogatives of white labor. Moreover, partisan machinations largely dictated the terms of the slavery debate; in 1820, southern Republicans were doubtless onto something when they argued that it “was not the love of liberty, humanity, or religion that lay behind northern opposition to slavery,” but rather, in the words of South Carolina Representative Charles Pinckney, “the love of power and the never ceasing wish [of a splintered Federalist Party] to regain the honors and offices of government” (quoted in Morrison 51).

But notwithstanding the preponderance of such racist and amoral politicking, it equally bears noting that the republican idealism and “religious scruples” that Cooper ascribes to Judge Temple very much informed early nineteenth-century rhetorics opposed to slavery and/or its extension. As historian Michael Morrison has noted in his excellent study *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (1997), the struggle over Missouri's admission to the Union evoked numerous voices who maintained that “the animating principle of the Union was freedom and, by extension, that the Constitution was an antislavery document. It

followed that as Congress extended the Constitution over new territories and states, it brought to them the blessings of freedom, not the entailed curse of bondage” (51). To borrow Forrest G. Robinson’s phrase, by deflecting the moral burden of slavery onto Richard Jones (one of *The Pioneers*’ few largely unsympathetic characters), Judge Temple emblemizes a desire shared by many Anglo-Americans during the nineteenth century, “have it both ways” when it came to the ideological underpinnings of westward expansion. That is, Templeton thrives in part from the labor of slaves, but also resonates with a multi-faceted opposition to the institution as well as its extension into the western territories. As Cooper remarks at the end of his 1859 footnote: “It was quite usual for men [like Temple] more or less connected with the Quakers, who never held slaves, to adopt [such] expedients.” Temple may be Aggy’s “real master,” but readers are told that it is before the exaggeratedly unprincipled Jones—who, in Cooper’s words, “did all the flogging”—that Aggy stands in “great terror” (52).

All of Temple’s interactions with Aggy are marked by an indulgent benevolence that typifies the master-slave relationship slavery apologists would increasingly inject into the national discourse over the next several decades; indeed, to the extent that *The Pioneers* is openly addressing the slavery issue, Aggy’s devotion to Temple and his daughter projects the familiar narrative of the “happy slave” that Carolyn Karcher described in 1980. “Temperamentally,” observes Karcher, “[. . .] the Negro tended to be child-like, happy-go-lucky, and generally docile [. . .] and submitted to discipline with equanimity [. . .] Most slaves, indeed, went the refrain, reciprocated their masters’ paternal guardianship with unequalled devotion and love, making the relationship

between master and slave more heartwarming to behold than any save that between parent and child” (*Shadow Over the Promised Land* 20). In part by virtue of the novel’s trading in this portrait of the master-slave dynamic, the contemporary sociopolitical controversies reflected by Temple’s official opposition to slavery on the one hand and unofficial allowance of its continuance on the other, are largely subsumed within the triumphalist arc of a narrative that—on its surface anyway—appears only tangentially concerned with the issue.²⁴

But in contrast to *The Pioneers*’ truncated engagement with Temple’s ambivalence towards slavery on the frontier, the novel conducts a more sustained troubling of his fidelity to conquest ideology, by repeatedly placing him in verbal opposition to the environmental recklessness attending expansion. To be sure, all of Temple’s big talking eco-consciousness occurs against the backdrop of readers’ knowledge that he operates at the epicenter of the depletionist pattern he laments; and late in the novel, Cooper explicitly ties the natural landscape’s elision to Temple’s stature as a visionary harbinger of Anglo-American civilization: “To his eye, where others saw nothing but a wilderness, towns, manufactories, bridges, canals, mines, and all the other resources of an old country were constantly presenting themselves” (306). The slippage between Judge Temple’s pursuit of nature’s baseline commodification and his sincerely-delivered, persuasive environmentalist talk remains a dominant motif throughout *The Pioneers*.

Ironically, it is the environmentally indifferent Jones who performs the novel’s most trenchant exposures of Temple’s double-dealing engagement with the natural

landscape. When Temple complains that the region's trees are "already begin[ning] to disappear before the wasteful extravagance of man," for example, Jones (in what is for him a rare moment of lucidity) correctly observes:

But this is always the way with you, Marmaduke; first it's the trees, then it's the deer, after that it's the maple sugar, and so on to the end of the chapter. One day you talk of canals through a country where there's a river or a lake every half-mile, just because the water won't run the way you wish it to go; and the next, you say something about mines of coal."
(249)

This pointed indictment of Judge Temple's rhetoric strikingly resembles that which Woodrow Call would silently levy on Augustus McCrae in *Lonesome Dove* over a century and a half later. Indeed, by virtue of his Big Talk, Temple anticipates a gaggle of Anglo-American personae whose actions on the frontier fully reflect prevailing ideologies of conquest, but whose words consistently portray counter-imperial proclivities. But Cooper prevents Jones's outburst from developing into a sustained critique, immediately shifting the narrative focus from Temple's behavior to Jones's exaggeratedly-drawn and unapologetic wastefulness,²⁵ when the latter adds to his harangue: "though any man who has good eyes like myself—I say with good eyes—can see more wood than would keep the city of London in fuel for fifty years" (249).

Cooper thus affords Temple the opportunity to ignore the biting commentary directed his way, and instead continue carrying the banner of rhetorical conservationism.

This exchange between Temple and Jones takes place in the midst of the memorable fishing scene, which over the course of two chapters juxtaposes the settlers' wasteful net-fishing technique against the ecologically sustainable spear-fishing technique practiced by Bumppo and Chingachgook, the novel's lone Indian. When the settlers triumphantly drag in their net, Cooper's treatment of the "haul" reveals a palpable ambivalence:

Fishes of various sorts were now to be seen, entangled in the meshes of the net, as it was passed through the hands of the laborers; and the water, at a little distance from the shore, was alive with the movements of the alarmed victims. Hundreds of white sides were glancing up to the surface of the water, and glistening in the firelight, when, frightened at the uproar and the change, the fish would again dart to the bottom, in fruitless escape for freedom.

"Hurrah!" shouted Richard; "one or two more heavy drags, boys, and we are safe."

"Cheerily, boys, cheerily!" cried Benjamin [Pump]; "I see a salmon trout that is big enough for a chowder." (247)

The long descriptive paragraph not only conveys sympathy for the fish—“alarmed victims” who are violently exposed to “uproar and change”—but even approaches their point of view; indeed, in a novel so explicitly invested in deliberating the meaning of liberty on the frontier, the phrase “fruitless escape for freedom” comes across as particularly loaded. Twenty-six years later, Henry David Thoreau was not trading in an entirely new discourse when he asked, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*: “Who hears the fishes when they cry?” (quoted in Shabecoff 48).²⁶ As Jones and Pump’s rousing cries indicate, however, *The Pioneers*’ fishing scene also imbues all present with the intoxicating thrill of conquest—and Cooper makes a point of emphasizing that Temple is no less affected than the others: “‘Pull heartily, boys,’ cried Marmaduke, *yielding to the excitement of the moment, and laying his hands to the net,* with no trifling addition of force” (248, my emphasis).

As the scene continues to unfold, Cooper’s tone undergoes a fascinating fluctuation between deep misgiving and unbridled enthusiasm. He again plays up the settlers’ “haul” as an act of mass slaughter, remarking that “the whole shoal of victims was safely deposited in a hollow of the bank, where they were left to flutter away their brief existence in the new and fatal element.” Yet in the very next sentence, though retaining his overridingly violent diction, Cooper throws the matter in a more triumphalist light: “Even Elizabeth and Louisa were greatly excited and highly gratified by seeing two thousand captives thus drawn from the bosom of the lake, and laid prisoners at their feet.” Then in the following sentence, Temple’s conservationist impulses suddenly re-emerge: “But when the feelings of the moment were passing away,

Marmaduke took into his hands a bass that might have weighed two pounds, and after viewing it for a moment, in melancholy musing, he turned to his daughter, and observed: ‘This is a fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of Providence’” (248).

For the remainder of the fishing sequence, Judge Temple continues to speak in this environmentalist register. But when Bumpo (the far more sincere but also politically impotent conservationist) arrives on the scene and expresses his disgust at what the settlers have done, Temple fails in his effort to insinuate an ideological allegiance between them. “‘No, no; we are not of one mind, Judge,’” proclaims Bumpo, “‘or you’d never turn good hunting grounds into stumpy pastures.’” Again, Cooper ironically enlists Jones to call out the comedic irony of Temple’s rhetorical efforts: “‘A very pretty confederacy, indeed! Judge Temple, the landlord and owner of a township, with Nathaniel Bumpo, a lawless squatter and professed deer killer, in order to preserve the game of the county. But, ‘duke, when I fish I fish; so, away, boys, for another haul’” (254). Replicating the effect of his response to Temple’s lament for the disappearance of the trees, Jones closes out his speech with an unapologetically depletionist mentality that brings upon him the weight of the scene’s culpability—once again sparing Temple the difficult task of answering for his own depletionist behavior. In *The Pioneers*’ fishing scene, Cooper undoubtedly dramatizes what Kolodny terms the drive “for adventurous conquest” (*Land Before Her* xiii)—but he simultaneously reveals an apprehension of what Lee Rozelle has called “the awe and terror that occurs when literary figures experience the contingency of place,” and which “prompts responsible

engagements with natural spaces, and [. . .] recalls crucial links between human subject and nonhuman world” (*Ecosublime* 1).

Providing a negotiative intersect between these two oppositional modes of environmental engagement, Temple’s conduct during the fishing scene represents one of the novel’s most recurrent patterns; though advancing the process Kolodny decries, Judge Temple simultaneously obtains moral cover for his actions by projecting the sensibilities Rozelle has located as a persistent motif running beneath the surface of nineteenth-century America’s literary frontier. As it does with the slavery issue, *The Pioneers* continually scapegoats other settlers (usually Richard Jones) in ways that lend both Temple and Cooper’s narrative voice a veneer of measured distance from the environmental destruction that the novel is chronicling.²⁷

Though continually overridden in *The Pioneers*, the rhetoric of environmental protest that it contains was hardly foreign to Cooper’s readers. Shabecoff points out, for example, that “[a]s early as 1793, the Reverend Nicholas Collins called on the American Philosophical Society to help protect birds from extinction until such time as it was learned what role they played in the ‘oeconomy of nature’—in effect what ecological niche they filled” (42). *The Pioneers*’ pigeon-shooting scene comes across as directly conversant with the worries Collins expressed. With Jones anxious to join the settlers in assaulting the “flock of alarmed birds” with “[e]very species of firearms,” Cooper states that Temple and Edwards: “In this wish [. . .] seemed equally to participate, for the sight was exhilarating to a sportsman.” Yet Cooper’s attitude towards the spectacle takes a sudden critical turn when he describes Bumppo “walking the field” with his dogs, with

“dead or wounded birds [. . .] beginning to tumble from the flocks,” manifesting outrage “at this wasteful and unsportsmanlike conduct” (233-234). When Jones incredibly aims a cannon at the flock to maximize his spoils, however, Cooper notes that “[e]ven Marmaduke forgot the morality of Leatherstocking” at the birds’ approach, “and, in common with the rest, brought his musket to a poise” (238). In the wake of the carnage that follows, narrator and Temple alike are once again placed in affected opposition to the slaughter; following Jones’s exuberantly cry of ““Victory!””, a sobered Temple responds ““I see nothing but eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror”” (239).

Judge Temple’s repeated complaints about “[t]he wastefulness of the settlers, with the noble trees of this country” (103) similarly reflect conservationist impulses that played out on a governmental level in the antebellum era. Anticipating Lieutenant Albert’s 1847 call for the legal protection of the landscape, Temple complains: “we are stripping the forests, as if a single year would replace what we destroy. But the hour approaches when the laws will take notice not only of the woods, but the game they contain also” (219). Writing from an 1823 vantage point, Cooper likely knew that Temple’s prediction had come true. As Anthony N. Penna notes in *Nature’s Bounty: Historical and Modern Environmental Perspectives* (1999), in 1799 the Congress enacted legislation enabling the President to purchase and sustain timberlands; moreover, Temple’s language obtained an immediate purchase with Cooper’s contemporary political scene, as only four years after the publication of *The Pioneers*, President John Quincy Adams initiated a “program of live oak conservation [. . .] to

purchase, preserve, and increase live oak stands.”²⁸ But Adams’s policy would immediately be “reversed when Andrew Jackson became president and insisted on the rights of the ‘people’ to the nation’s resources. The people, of course, included the timber companies that were rapidly destroying the nation’s forests and accumulating huge profits” (Shabecoff 42).

Just as Judge Temple’s frequent counter-imperial arguments for sustainable environmental engagement resonate with early American efforts to protect the nation’s natural resources, he and the other settlers of Templeton precisely foreshadow the exploitative approach that President Jackson would codify in 1829. Inspecting Billy Kirby’s sugar manufactory, both Cooper and Temple protest the frontiersman’s “extremely wasteful and inartificial” manner of drawing sap from the maples. Exclaims Temple: “‘You are not exempt from the censure yourself, Kirby, for you make *dreadful wounds* in these trees where a small incision would effect the same object.’” Thus vividly anthropomorphizing the maples as though they were the victims of reckless surgery, Temple appears on the verge of forwarding a substantive eco-critique. However, the landowner immediately finds himself backpedalling before Kirby’s simple, optimistic rejoinder.

“Why, I don’t know, Judge’ [. . .] it seems to me, if there’s a plenty of anything in this mountainous country, it’s the trees. If there’s any sin in chopping them, I’ve a pretty heavy account to settle; for I’ve chopped over the best half of a thousand acres, with my own hands,

counting both Vermont and York states; and I hope to live to finish the whull, before I lay up my ax [. . .]”

“Thou reasonest with judgment, William,” returned Marmaduke.

“So long as the old world is to be convulsed with wars, so long will the harvests of America continue.” (218)

Here Temple not only lets Kirby off the hook for his destructive enterprise, but by indulgently excusing that enterprise with rhetorics of inevitability, he covers his own culpability as well. Far from coming across as a rank despoiler, in the broader context of the novel, Kirby enjoys the affection and open respect of every persona in *The Pioneers*, including the narrator; indeed, to an extent surpassing any other character in Cooper’s text, it is Kirby whose simplistic approach to the community, its laws, and the natural environment, most accurately embodies the “settler” that Ronald Reagan lionized in his second Inaugural Address, “push[ing] west” and “fill[ing] the unknowing air” with his songs.²⁹

Of all the outspoken personae in *The Pioneers*, it is only Bumpo who perpetually, and without equivocation, reminds Temple of the exploitative nature of his relationship to the lands he occupies. McWilliams notes of the famous courtroom confrontation: “Whereas Judge Temple sympathizes with Natty’s viewpoint, Leatherstocking makes no effort to understand the Judge’s more complex but equally moral codes of justice. Natty simply cannot understand the function of law in a social context” (123). This emphasis on Temple’s fair-mindedness is warranted in the context

of the novel's juxtaposition of the rule of man against the republican rule of law. But in terms of *The Pioneers*' equally probing engagement with ecological conquest, Temple's capacity for apprehending and ventriloquizing extant oppositional viewpoints does not attenuate the novel's investment in legitimizing that conquest. If anything, the counter-imperial Big Talk that Temple issues throughout the novel only serves to perpetuate an illusory sense of resolution to issues that would only grow more controversial over the course of the nineteenth century.

Cooper's literary celebrity became fully realized with the publication of *The Pioneers*. As James Wallace notes, the novel's appearance in February 1823 marked a "major cultural event in the United States. By noon on February 1, 3,500 copies had been distributed, and newspapers reported the arrival of the novels at major ports [. . .] American reviewers," he further notes, "were almost unanimous in their enthusiasm for the new novel" (Wallace 163-64). In terms of influence on the American imagination from his own era and into our own, moreover, Cooper knows few if any rivals among American literary artists. As Wayne Franklin states at the beginning of his recent biographical treatment, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years* (2007):

Almost single-handedly in the 1820s, Cooper invented the key forms of American fiction—the Western,³⁰ the sea tale,³¹ the Revolutionary romance—forms that set a suggestive agenda for subsequent writers, even for Hollywood and television. Furthermore, in producing and shrewdly marketing fully 10 percent of all American novels in the 1820s, most of

them best sellers, Cooper made it possible for other aspiring authors to make a living by their writings. That was a rare prospect at a time when “American literature” still seemed like a contradiction in terms and when, even in England, many writers received little income for their work. (xi)

Cooper’s influence in large part obtained, and continues to obtain, by virtue of his skill at negotiating counter-imperial impulses while at the same time maintaining an unambiguous Anglo-American triumphalism in his writings. While not subscribing to Edwin Fussell’s famous statement that “the rest of American writing through Whitman is a footnote on” the “Leatherstocking tales,” I do argue that in his manner of engaging ideological conflicts attending expansion, Cooper established a kind of ground-floor template for increasingly sophisticated rhetorics that would attend the United States’ self-narrated frontier experience.

Focusing on the most emblematic period of Manifest Destiny, the chapters that follow contextualize representative frontier writings within counter-imperial discourses that impelled the nation’s political, cultural, and literary developments. Chapter II, titled “Fuller’s Dance with the West: Transculturalism and Counter-Imperial Discourse in *Summer on the Lakes*,” situates Fuller’s first published book within the heated expansion-related controversies that attended the 1844 presidential contest between Henry Clay and James K. Polk. I show that in her treatment of the American West, Fuller appropriated familiar, albeit routinely marginalized, counter-imperial sensibilities. Employing the metaphor of the dance as her governing trope for engaging unfamiliar

landscapes, peoples, and even modes of community, Fuller placed the counter-imperial impulse at the center of her western travelogue, and in the process anticipated the influential transcultural politics that distinguish her European dispatches at the end of the decade.

Chapter III, “[T]he appearance of a traitorous combination”: Registers of Counter-Imperial Dissent in Francis Parkman’s *Oregon Trail*,” discusses Parkman’s complex (and heretofore critically-neglected) engagement with controversies surrounding the United States’ war with Mexico. Although *Oregon Trail* maintains a primary narrative voice wholly invested in ideologies of conquest, Parkman, through the rhetoric of Big Talk, peppers his narrative with references to the war’s most popular negative associations, including military desertion, slavery, and various unflattering stereotypes of the regular and volunteer soldiery.

Finally, in Chapter IV, “Melville and American Ambivalence Towards Expansionism” I explore the deeply conflicted engagement with Manifest Destiny that informed Melville’s writings from the late 1840s through the early 1850s. Melville’s first book, *Typee* (1846), and the raucous public response it evoked together illuminate the rising tensions between expansionist doctrine and subsurface registers of dissent. His 1849 review of *Oregon Trail*, entitled “Mr. Parkman’s Tour,” tapped into familiar lines of critique from the political and literary spheres to deconstruct the racialized triumphalism underpinning *Oregon Trail*. And with his ambivalent treatment of hunting in *Moby-Dick* (1851), Melville both payed tribute to the triumphalism freighting the

antebellum United States' narrated West, while also enacting a powerful articulation of the era's counter-imperial impulse.

Notes

1. McMurtry's identification of an impasse between *Lonesome Dove*'s composition and its public reception is intriguing, not only due to his authorship of the novel, but perhaps even more so given his reputation as a harsh critic of the facts and myths surrounding the American West. See, for example, his 1968 essay "Southwestern Literature?," which condemns a unit of Texas Rangers led by Captain L.H. McNelly for atrocities they committed in 1875 against an encampment of Mexican laborers they had reportedly mistaken for cattle thieves. Also see *Oh What A Slaughter* (2005), which looks at the rhetorical and political fallout from "several massacres that occurred in the American West during the several decades when the native tribes of our plains and deserts were being displaced from their traditional territories by a vast influx of white immigrants" (2). Critical efforts such as these stand in stark contrast to McMurtry's treatment of the West in *Lonesome Dove*, which bears the following descriptive blurb on the back of the Simon & Shuster paperback edition: "Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* is the grandest novel ever written about the last, defiant wilderness of America. Journey to the dusty little Texas town of Lonesome Dove, and meet [. . .] heroes and outlaws, whores and ladies, Indians and settlers. Richly authentic, beautifully written, always dramatic, *Lonesome Dove* is a book to make us laugh, weep, dream, and remember."

2. No less convinced than Kowalewski of the novel's anti-heroic composition, Miller-Pullenhage asserts that "in setting Call's unwillingness to question his ideals and actions against Gus's consistent doubts about their past and present enterprises, McMurtry makes the pair too inconsistent to follow" (84).

For a far less sanguine reading of McMurtry's engagement with westward expansion, see D.L. Birchfield's "Lonesome Duck: The Blueing of a Texas-American Myth" (1995), which notes that the time period readers are given for Call and McCrae's service with the Rangers likely overlaps with the pattern of torture and indiscriminate killings that McMurtry decried in "Southwestern Literature?," and definitely runs concurrent with the Rangers' genocidal campaign against Indian tribes throughout the state. Writes Birchfield:

Imagine a scenario in which Hitler manages an armistice that allows his regime to remain in power. His aging Nazi Storm Troopers could become figures of romantic heroism in contemporary literature. If a novelist of sufficient talent were to take up the task, infusing his characters with an engaging comraderie, there might be a Pulitzer Prize in it [. . .] In *Lonesome Dove*, one can only lament [McMurtry's] choice of heroes. Texas Rangers who were in active service in the middle of the Nineteenth Century do not deserve to be portrayed as anything other than villains in works of literature. It is open to question whether Texas Rangers of any era deserve much in the way of sympathetic treatment. (56-57)

Whatever one is to conclude about Birchfield's totalizing assertions of literary justice, his article raises a salient counterpoint to Miller-Pullenhage's observation that "[c]learly,

‘accurate scholarship’ about McMurtry’s own work should illustrate how he ironizes and demythicizes ‘lies’ from the old West” (76). In *Larry McMurtry and the West: An Ambivalent Relationship* (1995), Mark Busby stakes out an aesthetically-focused middle ground between these polar interpretations: “Ultimately, the strength of *Lonesome Dove* is the complex way that it intertwines myth and anti-myth into an intricate whole, for it is not simply an attack on the myth, nor is it simply a formula novel serving up larger-than-life heroes without real human traits” (184).

3. Also see Forrest G. Robinson’s *Having It Both Ways: Self-Subversion in Western Popular Classics* (1993), which argues that authors ranging from James Fenimore Cooper to Owen Wister to Zane Grey contribute to an overarching narrative that, while celebrating the “exploits of white men” in the West, also has proven “peculiarly alive to the grave injustices of the social order” it depicts, “especially as those injustices bear of people of color and women [. . .] Each of the novels seems on its face to celebrate a leading article of the national faith, yet each betrays an impulse, a self-subversive reflex, to undermine what it appears so clearly to approve” (1-2). While Robinson emphasizes patterns of textual “self-subversion,” however, I am identifying an appropriative process by which literary texts bind ideologically opposed discourses into one another’s active service. This pattern of ideological appropriation, moreover, proves at least as pervasive in works that take an explicitly counter-imperial line—as I will argue in Chapter II, for example, Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes* performs a covert hostility to prevailing tenets of expansionist doctrine, yet along the way integrates those tenets into her mainline protest narrative.

4. In his Foreword to *A Tour on the Prairies* (1985), historian Richard Batman notes that prior to making the journey to Oklahoma with Indian commissioner Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, Irving had spent the last seventeen years of his life in Europe, and had increasingly tailored his writings to European settings and themes:

This had created a suspicion—or at least indifference—on the part of many [American] readers, and Irving had long been sensitive to this criticism [. . .] Thus, when he returned to America in 1832, he seemed determined to see as much of his native country as possible and to sink roots once again into its soil [. . .] The popularity of *A Tour on the Prairies* only strengthened the decision to write of the West, and out of it, of course, came Washington Irving’s *Astoria* [1836], which was followed later by his *Adventures of Captain Bonneville* [1837]. (viii-xiv, xvii).

5. Irving published *A Tour on the Prairies* only four years after the Indian Removal Act. As I discuss at several points throughout this dissertation, Removal was only one of several “solutions” that for decades had been bandied about by state and federal legislators, presidents, newspaper editors, religious leaders, and secular reformers; relatedly, during the period in which Irving published his book, the American public was markedly divided in its attitude towards government ambassadors, explorers, and missionaries who, upon entering the Indians’ “native” wilderness, proceeded to dictate terms. Particularly in chapters II and IV, I emphasize the degree of public

ambivalence that obtained over these issues. In Chapter III, I engage related anxieties over settlers' and the American government's treatment of Mexicans, leading up to and during the US-Mexican War.

6. This is not to deny that Irving in *Tour on the Prairies* and elsewhere throughout his long career manifested a genuine concern over such issues. Indeed the total corpus of Irving's writings communicates ambivalence towards expansion, especially in the area of Indian Removal. See for example Daniel Littlefield's "Washington Irving and the American Indian" (1979). In Chapter IV of this dissertation, I discuss Irving's passionately counter-imperial defense of the Indian in two 1814 articles that he published in the popular *Analectic Magazine*.

7. In Chapter II, I argue that the runup to the 1844 Presidential contest between James K. Polk and Henry Clay brought the antebellum controversy over United States expansionism to a new level of ideological friction, and that Polk's victory fundamentally set the stage for Manifest Destiny's emblematic period. Thus, here I am slightly extending on the timeline put forward by Edwin Fussell in his groundbreaking study, *Frontier: American Literature & the American West* (1965): Fussell identified the years spanning 1846-1851 as "the most dramatic phase of American expansion, an expansion that in these years carried well beyond the West Coast into what was popularly called the Western Ocean" (261).

8. Indispensable representative texts of this critical trend include Larry Reynolds, *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance* (1988); Lawrence Buell, "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon" (1992);

William Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (1994); Shelly Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (2002); John Carlos Rowe, “Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality” (2003); and Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (2004). Notwithstanding these and other important contributions to the internationalization of the field, however, it remains the case that “[t]he average article or monograph [. . .] projects a vision of nineteenth-century American literary history far more autotelic than that of the writers themselves except in their wildest cultural nationalism dreams” (Buell 594).

9. Maintaining the sincerity of the President’s appeals, Prucha cites an 1817 letter from then-General Jackson to Secretary of War James Monroe, written in view of his successful military campaigns against the Creek, Cherokee, and Chickesaw Indians: ““The sooner these lands are brought into market, [the sooner] a permanent security will be given to what, I deem, the most important, as well as the most vulnerable part of the union. The country once settled, our fortifications of defence in the lower country compleated, all [E]urope will cease to look at it with an eye to conquest”” (528).

10. Here I am in large part echoing a contention that Larry Reynolds has articulated in his provocative recent study, *Devils and Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne’s Damned Politics* (2008). Reynolds suggests that “in this age of ideological critique” (9), the lack of critical interest in addressing the myriad complexities of the slavery debate stems from the fact that these complexities fulfill “no obvious purpose in

advancing a politics of liberation or ‘transformative social action’” (79). Similarly, my alternative approach to studying the antebellum public’s response to expansion in some ways reflects Reynolds’ stated premise with regards to Hawthorne: “[T]o do justice to the depth, complexity, and even progressiveness of Hawthorne’s political views,” he observes in the Preface, “it is necessary to [. . .] examine them from Hawthorne’s perspective, as part of his own historically and internationally informed—albeit still partial—imaginative world” (xiv).

11. Turner’s paper does cede that frontier expansion posed “dangers as well as benefits” to the development of American civilization. He notes, for example, that the “democracy born of free land” featured a hyperbolic degree of “selfishness and individualism,” and “allowed a laxity in regard to government affairs which has rendered possible the spoils system and all the manifest evils that follow from the lack of a highly developed civic spirit. In this connection may be noted also the influence of frontier conditions in permitting lax business honor, inflated paper currency, and wild-cat banking” (32). But identifying expansionism’s economic and bureaucratic corruptions is a far cry from representing its attendant cultural and political controversies.

12. Compare, for example, Limerick’s use of the phrase “mid-nineteenth century articles of faith” with her observation, earlier in the book, that in “the broad sweep of Western history, it may look as if a united social unit called ‘white people’ swept Indians off their lands; that group [. . .] was not a monolith at all but a complex swirl of people as adept at preying on each other as at preying on Indians” (51).

13. Arguably, popular twentieth-century artists have on the whole shown a far greater sensitivity to the longstanding ambivalences freighting America's response to expansion, than have either literary critics or politicians. See, for example, John Lenihan's *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film* (1985), which demonstrates that through the immensely popular genre of the Western film, post-World War II Hollywood provided "one of the mechanisms a democratic society used to give form and meaning to its worries about its own destiny at a time when its position seemed more central and its values less secure than ever before" (9).

14. More recently Slotkin has pursued similar themes in numerous essays (including a contribution to *Culture of United States Imperialism*), as well as two book-length studies concerned with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively: *The Fatal Environment: the Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985) and *Gunfighter Nation: the Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1998).

15. *Facing West* originally appeared in print in 1980. This text's appreciable impact on the work of historians and literary critics is suggested by its subsequent reprinting in two separate editions, dated 1990 and 1997 respectively.

16. Throughout *The Land Before Her*, Kolodny cites Slotkin's work as evidentiary support for the ultra-violent tenor impelling authored literatures of the frontier, even as she chides him for failing to recognize alternative visions offered by women writers of the same era.

17. Sachs cites Albert and a number of other similarly-minded military personnel to support his contention that “The Army’s Corps of Topographical Engineers, which sponsored [John Charles] Frémont’s expeditions, may have concerned itself primarily with facilitating settlement, but many of its topographers were convinced that settlement had gone horribly wrong” (19). In Chapter IV of this dissertation, I discuss the impact of Frémont’s expeditions on mid-century expansionist discourses.

18. Also see Philip Shabecoff’s *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (2003) and Lee Rozelle’s *Ecosublime: Environmental Awe and Terror from new world to Oddworld* (2006). Shabecoff, a professional journalist and environmental activist, traces the environmentalist tradition to several well-known nineteenth-century figures including Daniel Boone, John J. Audubon, John Quincy Adams, George Caitlin, John Muir, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau. The latter two authors Shabecoff calls the “bedrock of American literature and American thought,” and further identifies with a New England transcendentalist movement that provided “the most influential articulation of the importance of nature and the relationship of humans to the natural world” (45). Rozelle, whose work I cite at several points in this dissertation, has demonstrated that American literature from the early nineteenth-century to the present sustains a pattern of environmentally-conscious discourse. In addition to making essential connections between themselves and the ecological systems they inhabit, Rozelle observes, figures in literary texts as diverse as Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Journal of Julius Rodman* (1840), Rebecca Harding Davis’s *Life in the Iron-Mills* (1861), and Charles Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Woman* (1899) experience

an “ecosublimity” designed to shock readers into associating environmental depletionism with their own dehumanization by a model of social progress keyed on the idea of frontier conquest.

19. In some ways my engagement with the United States’ response to westward expansion resembles Reynolds’ approach to 1840s anxieties over urban poverty, sensationalized crime, and sexual scandal, as well as the outspoken and often hypocritical reform movements that rose to address such problems. As his title indicates, Reynolds is primarily concerned with the authors F.O. Matthiessen elevated in his classic study, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941). Throughout, Reynolds uses the penny presses and sensational literatures of the period to argue that during the period known as the American Renaissance, “literariness resulted not from a *rejection*” of this “socioliterary context but rather from a full *assimilation* and *transformation* of key images and devices from this context” (7). While my own discussion for the most part eschews questions of “literariness,” throughout this dissertation I similarly emphasize the impact on canonized texts of contemporaneous, popular literary and political discourses surrounding the idea of the American West.

20. Perhaps the most damning treatment of Cooper in this respect—and certainly the most ideologically sweeping in terms of the audience for whom Cooper was writing—belongs to Cheyfitz, who writes that Chingachgook’s “self-willed death by fire” at the conclusion of *The Pioneers*:

marks a narrative moment of Anglo-American wishful thinking about all Indians as it masks in suicide Anglo-American homicide of Native Americans. This moment is typically recorded as a nostalgic lament for the *inevitable* “vanishing” of all Native American peoples, as a helplessness before the inevitable, as if it were part of an irreversible evolutionary process rather than political. (121)

While I certainly agree with Cheyfitz’s assessment of the justificatory rhetoric of inevitability embedded in the end of *The Pioneers* and elsewhere throughout Cooper, his use of the term “Anglo-American wishful thinking” reflects a strain of literary criticism that projects ideological hegemony upon antebellum white Americans, and which I seek to challenge throughout this dissertation.

21. A particularly thorough example of this approach is John P. McWilliams’s *Political Justice in a Republic: James Fenimore Cooper’s America* (1972): 101-129.

22. Closer to my own engagement with Temple’s slippery rhetoric is William P. Kelly’s treatment in *Plotting America’s Past: Fenimore Cooper and the Leatherstocking Tales* (1983). “Incorporating a respect for nature with a commitment to western development,” writes Kelly, “he creates in Templeton a middle ground equally distant from a European city and a trackless wilderness [. . .] In the midst of disconcerting social flux, he turns to the past to reduce the anxieties occasioned by a problematic future” (7, 13).

23. On the level of state politics, even by 1793 (the year in which *The Pioneers* begins), New York had emerged as a site of strong anti-slavery sensibility, with many assemblymen and senators pushing not only for abolition but also creating a firestorm by moving to give freed slaves the right to vote. In the 1859 edition of *The Pioneers* (the edition I am working with here), Cooper adds a footnote to his description of Aggy's status in which he addresses the state controversy; he writes that the few slaves who remained in New York "were all unconditionally liberated in 1826, or after the publication of this tale" (51). New York State banned the slave trade outright in 1788, and throughout the 1780s witnessed the rise of a Manumission Society which "hector[ed] newspaper editors against advertising slave sales, pressured auction houses and ship-owners, and gave free legal help to slaves suing their masters. This effort, along with a booming birth rate and a flood of white workers from other states who did not have to be maintained during periods of unemployment and were willing to work for low wages [had] made slavery obsolete" by the turn of the century ("Emancipation in New York").

24. For a recent and more extensive treatment of the importance of slavery discourses to *The Pioneers*, see Andy Doolen's *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (2005). Identifying his discussion as participatory in a tradition of "progressive critical discourse, which requires the academic to write in behalf of the oppressed against the state's racist practices" (xxi), Doolen argues that the *Pioneers*' treatment of slavery thwarts the book's "desperate desire to lend credence to a republican fiction moving into the future," and betrays instead "an imperialist record of racial domination" (xxvi). Doolen observes that his discussion of the impact of "hidden

imperialism” (xiii) on United States culture contributes to a critical continuum that includes Slotkin, Kolodny, Drinnon, Kaplan, Streeby, and Cheyfitz. While I share such critics’ concern over ways in which antebellum frontier literatures “legitimized the operations of imperialism” within the broader American mind, this dissertation challenges prevailing notions that a baseline imperialism remained “hidden” within popular, political, or literary discourse during the antebellum period. Indeed, Cooper’s reference to the dilemma posed by Temple’s anti-slavery sensibilities is indicative of the bitter and broad-ranging contestations that surrounded Anglo-American ideologies of conquest, throughout the nineteenth century.

25. Wallace has similarly noted that, “[t]he realization of [Temple’s] vision is entrusted to and subverted by Richard Jones,” who is at the same time “clearly a projection of one aspect of Judge Temple” (141).

26. Shabecoff’s treatment of this passage from *A Week* traces an eco-activist trajectory from Thoreau through the 1970s novels of Edward Abbey: “He raised the question of the rights of animals [. . .] This passage also contains what may be the first reference to the possibility of ecosabotage—acts of violence against property to protect animals and other parts of nature. Addressing the oppressed shad, he says, ‘I for one am with thee, and who knows what may avail a crowbar against that Billerica Dam?’” (48).

27. The persuasiveness of this scapegoating is reflected in Kelly’s assertion that “Throughout *The Pioneers* Judge Temple opposes the rapacious energy of the settlers” (22). In *The American Historical Romance* (1987), George Dekker certainly implicates Temple in the imperialist project that Templeton signifies, but asserts a clear distinction

between this character and the visceral, nascent Jacksonianism represented by Tempelton's other settlers. Temple, Dekker argues, is a:

bourgeois beneficiary of the American Revolution [who] has clear affinities with [Sir Walter] Scott's whiggish merchants and lawyers, themselves the heirs and beneficiaries of the Glorious Revolution of the preceding century. It is as easy and natural for him as it was for them to make the transition from progressive middle-class revolutionary to progressive *entrepreneur*, supplying the ambition, brains and energy—albeit not the blood and derring-do—necessary for the imperialist expansion of the modern nation-state. (41)

Notwithstanding the insight he provides on Temple's antecedents here, Dekker's sense that he stands above *The Pioneers* "blood and derring-do" more reflects the character's verbal affectations than his active participation in the rampant environmental depletionism that Cooper's novel depicts.

28. Continues Penna: "In fact, the government sponsored the first forestry experimentation station on the Santa Rosa peninsula of Florida in 1828. Within a year, the forestry station had replaced 40,000 trees, constructed buildings, and built six miles of new roads" (27).

29. With Temple and his party approaching Kirby's crude sugar mill, Cooper writes:

A fine powerful voice roused them from their momentary silence, as it rang under the branches of the trees, singing the following words of that inimitable doggerel, whose verses, if extended, would reach from the waters of the Connecticut to the shores of Ontario[. . .] no American ever hears its jingling cadence without feeling a thrill at his heart.

The opening verse of the lyrics that Cooper thus celebrates smack of good-natured environmental destruction: “The Eastern States be full of men,/ The Western full of woods, sir,/ The hills be like a cattle pen,/ The roads be full of goods, sir!/ Then flow away, my sweet sap,/ And I will make you boily;/ Nor catch a woodsman’s hasty nap,/ For fear you should get roily.” (214)

30. In *Showdown*, Lenihan observes:

Years earlier James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* (especially *The Pioneers* and *The Prairie*) raised disturbing questions about the wilderness’s giving way to a civilization where regulations, constraints, and behavioral vulgarities clashed with the natural virtues and instincts of the frontier hero. Western movies, also, contrasted the rugged hero’s freedom and natural virtues with the ordinary or artificial quality of the townspeople; but, unlike Cooper, they addressed an audience for whom the frontier was no more. (14)

31. In Chapter IV I note that Cooper's sea fiction, and the literature that developed in its wake, engaged antebellum conquest ideologies on terms quite similar to those informing the frontier writing genre that he popularized with the "Leatherstocking tales." Both genres reflect an intense apprehension of the immediate and metaphoric connections obtained between hunting on the frontier and territorial conquest.

CHAPTER II

MARGARET FULLER'S DANCE WITH THE WEST: TRANSCULTURALISM AND
COUNTER-IMPERIAL DISCOURSE IN *SUMMER ON THE LAKES, IN 1843*

In her New Year's Day 1848 dispatch to the *New York Daily Tribune*, Margaret Fuller, inspired by nascent revolutionary republicanism throughout Europe, bitterly lamented what she considered her own country's "boundless lust of gain." The United States' war with Mexico, she wrote, was a "wicked War" spawned by the "horrible cancer of Slavery," and the terms of its support indistinguishable from "arguments in favor of the spoliation of Poland" ("*These Sad but Glorious Days*" 165). The combative tone impelling Fuller's dispatch reflected the political radicalization she was experiencing at the time in Italy, but her internationally-conscious condemnations of slavery and, relatedly, United States imperialism, would not have surprised readers familiar with her work prior to crossing the Atlantic. In a stateside, front-page column published in the *Tribune* exactly two years earlier, she had listed Texas' annexation, slavery's extension, the destruction of Cassius Clay's abolitionist press in Kentucky, and the systemic murdering of Mormons as the "fruits of American liberty [. . .] defended on the true Russian grounds: 'We (the stronger) know what you (the weaker) ought to do and be, and it *shall* be so'" (quoted in Bean and Myerson 328). *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, published by *Tribune* editor Horace Greeley in 1845, indicted "what has been done towards the red man [and] the black man" as the "scoff of the world," and framed the annexation of Texas as a threat to "the enfranchisement of Jews, Irish,

women, ay, and of Americans in general too” (13, 97). And in her 1844 engagement with the American West, *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*—the work that attracted Greeley’s professional interest in her to begin with—Fuller had already developed the transcultural vantage point that would sustain her latter-decade, counter-imperial allegiances.

As Larry Reynolds has suggested, one of the more unresolved and provocative issues in Fuller scholarship involves locating *Summer on the Lakes* in relation to “the ways in which and the degree to which she participated in and resisted imperialist discourse and conquest ideology” (“Prospects” 147). On the whole, *Summer* continues to suffer an undervaluation of its investment in counter-imperial discourse—an undervaluation stemming in large part, I would argue, from a broader-based dismissal of the currency such discourses obtained in the decades leading up to the book’s publication. Though persistently relegated to marginal status in the political, journalistic, and literary spheres, forceful mainstream opposition to conquest ideology was very much in play when Fuller visited and wrote about the Great Lakes region. Channeling this resistance through an elaborate combination of figurative narration and straightforward social critique, *Summer on the Lakes*, far from a stunted effort to “dismantle the manifest destiny plot” (Gilmore 205), both exposes and protests that plot’s lethal failure to imagine the West and its inhabitants according to their own discrete terms.¹

Disputing “Hard and Unconscionable Terms”: The 1844 Presidential Election

In her Introduction to *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), Amy Kaplan enlists Perry Miller’s *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956) as a jumping-off point for examining processes by which “imperialism has been simultaneously formative and disavowed in the foundational discourse of American studies” (5). While Kaplan’s discussion of the ironies inherent in United States imperialism informs my own historically-contextualized reading of *Summer on the Lakes*, I depart from her warrant that these ironies escape interrogation (or even notice) in America’s self-conceptualized role on the international stage.² Acts of American aggression abroad—whether economic or military—tend to bring about intra-national identity crises of various kinds; and (no less than our own highly polarized political moment) the United States’ emblematic era of westward expansion was fraught with myriad surface-level anxieties and fierce ideological contestations.

That counter-imperial discourse factored significantly in American politics and culture at the time of *Summer*’s publication can be seen in the arguments that attended the 1844 presidential campaign, which brought to a head longstanding and interrelated controversies involving Indian policy, territorial annexation, and slavery. In taking up these explosive questions, political leaders of all stripes were expected to frame arguments in ways that affirmed Americans’ proud sense that “the struggle for independence from British colonialism makes U.S. culture inherently anti-imperialist” (Kaplan 12). To fully appreciate the value in choosing a nominee who could mediate tensions between republican, anti-imperialist ideals and the exigencies of territorial

enterprise, members of both parties had only to consider the recent example of Andrew Jackson. The iconic former president—whose unsubtle behind-the-scenes maneuverings played a determining role in the outcome of the 1844 Democratic primary—had reaped his own political successes due in no small measure to a seemingly instinctive knack for bridging the distance between these diametrically oppositional worldviews.

As early as his first annual address to the Congress in 1829, Jackson had justified the Cherokee's impending forced removal from Georgia through arguments specifically tailored to counter-imperial and humanitarian concerns. The President designated it "too late to inquire" whether the United States had acted justly in including Indian territory "within the bounds of new states, whose limits they could control." Debate over the federal government's past behavior towards the Indian being thus judiciously foreclosed, he submitted to Congress "the interesting question whether something can not be done, consistently with the rights of States, to preserve this much-injured race [. . .] I suggest for your consideration the propriety of setting them apart an ample district west of the Mississippi [. . .] to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes as long as they shall occupy it" (quoted in Torr 70-71). The address reflects a pattern to which Jackson would frequently return throughout his presidency: defending Indian Removal less on the grounds of geographic entitlement or racial superiority than as a necessary means for preserving the United States' sovereignty while at the same time dutifully protecting Native Americans from physical annihilation.

For the majority annexationist wing of Jackson's Democratic Party, this method of appropriating counter-imperial rhetorics to justify Indian Removal translated

smoothly into the 1844 political discourse. Acquiring Texas, proponents argued, hardly represented naked territorial seizure, but rather only provided a necessary bulwark against the encroachment of colonial European nations; in addition to the dangers posed by the Spanish crown, they insisted, Great Britain also had designs on seizing Texas and using its cotton production to undermine the Southern economy (White 75). Pro-annexation politicians and newspapers were also quick to remind their opponents that Texas was overwhelmingly populated by American citizens; and more to the point, they insisted, by law Texas belonged to the United States already. Moreover, to controvert suspicions that annexation represented a conspiratorial plot to extend slavery, more than a few even went so far as to suggest that “re-annexation” promised the additional benefit of *de-escalating* sectional conflict over that issue. In July 1844 the *Democratic Review* happily predicted that Texas’ formal inclusion would, following slavery’s inevitable end, facilitate the exodus of the “negro race” into Central and Latin America (“The Re-Annexation of Texas” 14).

Democrats, however, were by no means universally on board with adding Texas to the Union. In April, presumptive presidential nominee Martin Van Buren, long entrenched in his opposition to slavery’s extension, came out unequivocally against annexation in a letter he addressed to Mississippi Congressman William H. Hammet and subsequently had published in the *Washington Globe*. Asserting that moral and political culpability for war with Mexico would fall squarely with the United States, the soon-to-be infamous letter emphasized an international context in which America stood to lose its claim as a beacon of republican liberty. Asking whether the country could “hope to

stand justified in the eyes of mankind” for provoking Mexico into a war for territory, Van Buren wrote:

This, Sir, is a matter of the very gravest import—one in respect to which no American statesman or citizen can possibly be indifferent. We have a character among the nations of the earth to maintain [. . .] It has hitherto been our pride and our boast that whilst the lust of power with fraud and violence in its train, has led other and differently constituted governments to aggression and conquest, our movements in these respects have always been regulated by reason and justice. (quoted in Greeley, *The American Conflict* 161-162)

Van Buren’s conflation of annexation with imperialism struck a nerve in a Democratic Party increasingly unable to reconcile its dual self-identification with decentralized governance and territorial enterprise. This contradiction continued to plague Democrats through the fall, as illustrated by *Evening Post* editor William Cullen Bryant’s proposition that “New York Democrats [. . .] vote for Polk but, in congressional contests, [. . .] support only candidates who opposed annexation” (Delbanco 104).

Van Buren’s letter, too, added appreciable momentum to sectionalism’s eclipse of partisan loyalty; attributing a “rabid character” to “some quarters” of the party he was offering to lead, he lent further credence to the fast-growing perception that westward expansion was a stalking horse for the extension of slavery. At the Baltimore

convention in May, the potent Southern contingent (which on the whole already distrusted Van Buren) quickly galvanized against him, and the featuring blow was delivered by Jackson, who not only withdrew personal support for his former Vice President, but also “collaborated with others to manipulate the Democratic convention rules in order to stop” him (Zarefsky 86). In a letter to *Globe* editor Francis P. Blair, Jackson lamented the position in which Van Buren’s letter had placed him: “I have shed tears of regret [. . .] I would to god I had been at Mr. V.B. elbow when he closed his letter” (quoted in Remini 646). Old Hickory instead endorsed Polk, a fellow Tennessean and ardent expansionist. Though a comparatively unknown and mediocre politician regarded with contempt by citizens of his own state (having twice been denied the governorship of Tennessee, he would go on to lose it in November as well), Polk nevertheless wound up leaving Baltimore with the nomination in hand.

For their part, the Whigs convened (also in Baltimore) only four years removed from winning the White House with a self-styled westerner and renowned “Indian fighter,” William Henry Harrison—whose postmortem successor, John Tyler, would fulfill a leading Democratic agenda by signing off on Texas’ annexation before leaving the White House in 1845. Still, in 1844 the Whigs overall “remained far less enthusiastic about expansion” than were their Democratic counterparts (White 76). Campaigning for the nomination in North Carolina, Henry Clay attempted to rally the base by releasing his own anti-annexationist letter, which was published in the *National Intelligencer* the same day Van Buren’s appeared in the *Globe*. “I regard all wars as great calamities to be avoided, if possible,” Clay wrote, adding what the country most

needed was “union, peace, and patience.” He reminded voters that annexation would not only trigger a war of aggression, but would also dangerously escalate the stakes of the slavery debate. Just as odious from an internationalist perspective, annexation would “proclaim to the world an insatiable and unquenchable thirst for foreign conquest or acquisition of territory.” In the end, the letter pleaded, annexation represented nothing less than a threat to the “integrity of the Union,” particularly insofar as the measure was “not called for by any general expression of public opinion” (quoted in *The American Conflict*, 163-164).

From the start of his campaign, then, the leading Whig presidential candidate framed annexation as nothing less than the beginning point of a national downward spiral. Clay’s fearful sense that the United States was devolving into an imperialist force, his expressed loathing for war in general, and his antagonism towards slavery’s extension all so mirrored Van Buren’s arguments that rival politicians and newspaper editors from both parties charged the two with having actually colluded on the issue of Texas.³ But whereas this stance cost Van Buren the Democratic nomination, it only solidified the frontrunner status Clay enjoyed in his own party. Certainly the Whigs were determined to avoid a nominee with the views of Tyler, a former Democratic Senator and consistent advocate for territorial expansion, who in the early 1830s had defected to the Whigs after a bitter falling out with President Jackson over federal banking policy.⁴ Instead, the Whigs elevated Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen to the top of their presidential ticket in early May (as *Summer on the Lakes* was going to press),

and established themselves as a viable—albeit disorganized and inconsistent—vehicle for counter-imperial argument.

It was a discursive banner Clay was comfortable carrying. For more than two decades he had been among the harshest critics of Indian Removal policy and what he perceived to be the United States' general bellicosity towards other nations. As Speaker of the House in January 1819, for instance, Clay famously decried then-General Jackson's seizure of Florida from the Spanish, and summary execution of two British subjects apprehended in that territory. That speech had inventoried atrocities committed by Jackson against the Creek and Seminole Indians—including the “dictatorial” Fort Jackson Treaty, which among other outrages violated Christianity's “holy character” by insisting the Creeks “deliver into our hands their prophets.” Clay had drawn particular attention to the Treaty's compulsory diction: “[t]he United States *demand*. The United States *demand*, is repeated five or six times.” It was not the Indians to blame for “the recent war,” but rather the lack of imaginative flexibility on the part of the American government. Explained Clay, “hard and unconscionable terms, extorted by the power of the sword and the right of conquest, served but to whet and stimulate revenge, and to give to old hostilities . . . greater exasperation and more ferocity” (quoted in Remini 163-164).

Fully Jackson's chief political rival by 1837, Clay at a public dinner in his home state of Kentucky lambasted the “miserable Black Hawk war” and the “more disgraceful Seminole War,” claiming that both emblemized the “fraud, violence, and injustice” of the President's Indian policies (quoted in Remini 489). Seven years later, in *Summer on*

the Lakes, Fuller would write: “Black Hawk’s [trail]! How fair the scene through which it led! How could they let themselves be conquered, with such a country to fight for!”

(31). In *Transfiguring America*, Fuller critic Jeffrey Steele rightly highlights the contrast between this passage and “the dominant attitudes of the age,” noting that “[m]ost writers saw the Indian tribes of the West as impediments slowing down the work of Manifest Destiny” (147). But while indicative of a minority voice, the condemnations uttered by Clay (who owned land in Illinois) suggest that in 1844 Fuller was not trading in unfamiliar rhetoric, let alone what Steele calls a “new viewpoint,” when she represented what had been done to the Black Hawks from the sympathetically-imagined vantage point of the Indians themselves.⁵

During their respective careers, Clay and Fuller were both friendly with several notable figures including Harriet Martineau, William Henry Channing, Charles Sumner, Mary Cheney Greeley, and, shortly after *Summer*’s publication, Mary’s husband Horace. In terms of the counter-imperial politics reverberating across *Summer on the Lakes*, the thematic overlaps among Fuller, Clay, and Greeley are especially compelling. In a biography of Greeley published the year he died, his friend (and prolific American historiographer) L.U. Reavis included a chapter entitled “Henry Clay and Margaret Fuller,” which begins:

No man can write, at length, about Horace Greeley, without speaking of Henry Clay and Margaret Fuller. They were to him more than simple friends, more than countrymen [. . .] Circumstances of organization and

life; affinity of character and similarity of thought on great social and political questions, kindled in Mr. Greeley's mind a most exalted admiration for these two distinguished persons. No other great man and great woman has moved upon this earth that Mr. Greeley so much believed in and admired. (515)

That Greeley harbored similarly-grounded admiration for Clay and Fuller is reflected by the encomiums he produced in their respective *Tribune* obituaries, as well as in *Recollections of a Busy Life* (1868). For a famously “self-made” and inexhaustible wordsmith such as Greeley, there was much ground for commending both of them; not unlike the *Tribune* editor himself, each had overcome relative economic obscurity and a lack of formal education to impact their contemporary cultural and political scenes, and in their emergence as critics of the American trajectory, both walked a fine rhetorical line between enthusiasm for the country's republican institutions and despair at the grasping uses to which they felt those institutions were increasingly being put.

Unlike Fuller, Clay was of course first and foremost a politician, and his stances on controversial issues were given to inconsistency and opportunism. For example, like his fellow Whig and ardent admirer Abraham Lincoln, Clay occupied a “radically centrist” position with respect to slavery. Though he abhorred the institution and vociferously opposed its extension, he also termed it “a necessary evil in the existing constitutional system,” and decried the Garrisonians and other radical abolitionists (including his cousin Cassius) as misguidedly dangerous to the union's preservation

(Shankman 101-102); tethered as the issue of annexation was to the slavery debate, Clay's 1844 appearance of "waffling" on Texas during the homestretch of the campaign (Steele 196) would not have come as much of a surprise to Americans familiar with his political career. Similarly, in his private correspondences and on the public stage alike, Clay was not above invoking appeals to white racial superiority that, whether in the form of condescending paternalism or outright hostility, seemed to infiltrate all sides of the debates over slavery and Indian Removal. Even his famous tirade against the Fort Jackson Treaty had included the backhanded expression of sympathy, "spare them their prophets! Spare their delusions! Spare their prejudices and superstitions! Spare them even their religion, such as it is! from open and cruel violence" (quoted in Remini 163). And in an 1825 letter to John Adams, Clay mitigated his refusal to "countenance inhumanity" towards Native American peoples by ventriloquizing popular claims that they were "destined to extinction" and "essentially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race." The Indians were not, he regretfully concluded, "an improvable breed, and their disappearance from the human family would be no great loss to the world" (quoted in White 102). The glaring contradictions attending Clay's approach to the "Indian question"—outrage on the one hand, smug cessions to racialized destiny on the other—are in a sense symptomatic of what Lucy Maddox has insightfully called "the ideological and discursive limits imposed by the rhetoric of the civilization-or-extinction argument" (11).

Clay's inconsistencies extended to questions of foreign policy as well. Like John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and other prominent Whigs, he spoke with great

eloquence and frequency of his wish to be surrounded by “friendly republics” (White 76), but remained perpetually open to all sorts of compromises for the sake of perceived economic and political expediency. Anna Brickhouse has noted that in the 1820s Clay opposed Congress’s “avowed interest in the liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico from Spain” because it would end slavery “in a key region of the triangular trade sustaining the US economy.” Yet as Brickhouse also points out, when President John Quincy Adams pressed Congress to provide diplomats for the 1826 Congress of Panama, his “opponents invoked the rhetoric of racial contagion, complaining that he had caught ‘Spanish American fever’ from his chief advisor, the ardent pan-Americanist Henry Clay” (5). Twenty years later, Clay’s “pan-American” thinking would come through plainly enough in a letter to Greeley, penned shortly after the outbreak of war with Mexico: “I lament its existence. A war between two neighboring Republics!” (quoted in Remini 680). Whatever Clay’s shortcomings, the letter’s plain tethering of neighborhood to republicanism illustrates a quality that often informed his public stances—apprehension of the moral and practical dimensions of shared space, as well as the value in peaceably negotiating competing worldviews and interests.

Frelinghuysen, meanwhile, owned a political record that was far more radical than Clay’s on a number of fronts, and his nomination to the Vice Presidency surprised members of both parties (Remini 645). President of the American Tract Society (whose missionary efforts among Native Americans Fuller ambivalently references in *Summer* [192]), Frelinghuysen was a leading voice in numerous evangelical causes, including abolitionism. His long involvement in New Jersey state politics and brief stint as a

Senator from that state had been marked by passionate advocacies on Native Americans' behalf, and during his Senate term, some two weeks after the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, Frelinghuysen lashed out at the law in what would become the most remembered performance of his political career.

The speech, which lasted six hours and spanned three days, challenged both chambers of Congress to objectively consider the nature of their conduct towards the Native American population. "We have crowded the tribes," he told them, "upon a few miserable acres on our southern frontier: it is all that is left to them of their once boundless forests: and still, like the horseleech, our insatiated cupidity cries, give! give!" As Frelinghuysen continued, he exhorted colleagues to identify across racial and cultural boundaries:

in the judgment of natural and unchangeable truth and justice, I ask, who is the injured, and who is the aggressor? [. . .] let those who please, denounce the public feeling on this subject as the morbid excitement of a false humanity; but [. . .] who can help feeling, sir? Do the obligations of justice change with the color of the skin? Is it one of the prerogatives of the white man, that he may disregard the dictates of moral principles, when an Indian shall be concerned? No, sir. In that severe and impartial scrutiny, which futurity will cast over this subject, the righteous award will be, that those very causes which are now pleaded for the relaxed enforcement of the rules of equity, urged upon us not only a rigid

execution of the highest justice, to the very letter, but claimed at our hands a generous and magnanimous policy. (quoted in Roth 45-46)

Frelinghuysen channeled familiar abolitionist talking points, standing his argument on the inconsequentialities of racial difference when viewed in light of higher mandates concerning justice, posterity, and divine law. While his reference to “futurity” seems to anticipate late twentieth-century perspectives on the brutalities attending westward expansion, his expressed alignment with “public feeling” denies any fringe status to his arguments. Fourteen years after this public excoriation of the Indian Removal Act, Vice-Presidential nominee Frelinghuysen had not relented in his counter-imperial positionings, and the ferocity of his opposition to conflict with Mexico exceeded even Clay’s. Each candidates’ nominations to the nation’s highest offices, though—nominations enthusiastically bestowed by the incumbent party—can appear more than a little anomalous considered alongside a current scholarship inundated with totalizing narratives of the era of Manifest Destiny.

Undoubtedly, the 1844 presidential campaign and its end result cannot be explained solely in terms of issues directly tied to westward expansion. In an October piece entitled “One Last Word Before The Election,” the *Democratic Review*, confident of victory, insisted that the Whigs would not be able to ascribe Polk’s triumph to “the extraneous accident of the Texas question” (323). Following the election, the *Review* continued in this vein. Declaring “*this is the most important election that has taken place since that of Jefferson in 1800*” (“First Word After the Election” 427-430), the

article proceeds to enumerate the many pitfalls America had miraculously escaped, conspicuously absent from which is any reference to expansionism. Notwithstanding the *Democratic Review*'s spin, however, expansion-bred controversies held center stage throughout the 1844 election season, and in combination with evidence of rampant vote fraud lingering in the wake of Polk's victory (Remini 664-665), the election's narrow margin of victory underscored the ideologically divided nature of the antebellum public, in relation to westward expansion.⁶

In his excellent biography *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*, Robert V. Remini (who interestingly, is best known for his biographical and scholarly work on Andrew Jackson) succumbs to the temptation to "speculate what might have been," declaring that had Clay won the presidency, "the Texas question would have been handled in a more conciliatory manner and the Mexican War might never have happened" (668). Whatever the circumstances and all speculation aside, for the third and final time Clay in fact lost his bid for the presidency. At the same time, it is equally true that in addition to those presidential nominations, for more than three decades Clay's politics showed enough traction to land him a high cabinet appointment and positions of leadership in both chambers of the Congress. In the American 1844, neither Clay nor even Frelinghuysen were particularly singular figures in terms of their views, but long-tenured and well-connected politicians skilled at ventilating widely-shared anxieties over the moral and practical ambiguities bred by expansion. By the time Margaret Fuller wrote and published *Summer on the Lakes*, the problematic American

West had thrust the contested issue of United States imperialism into the antebellum limelight.

“Would You Speak to a Man, First Learn His Language!”: Big Talk and Margaret Fuller

Given Fuller’s membership within New England Transcendentalist circles, it is not surprising that before signing on with the *Tribune*, her reservations about westward expansion—like her opposition to slavery and higher-profile advocacy for women’s rights—rarely emerged in the form of straightforward, protracted commentary on quotidian political figures or developments. Going by the letters and published writings alone, her thoughts on Clay and the 1844 election appear virtually nonexistent. Yet intellectual and political kinships abound between these two figures. To begin with, it was in the West that both Clay and Fuller came into their own; just as the former “had found it necessary to leave the gentry-dominated Virginia to make a name for himself in the frontier society of Kentucky” (Shankman 50), Fuller’s letters as well as *Summer on the Lakes* bear out Belasco Smith’s observation that, at the age of thirty-three, even while “discover[ing] the plains of Illinois, the plight of the Indians, and the condition of the settlers’ wives, [Fuller] explored the undiscovered continent of her own life as well” (xiii).

Like the thrillingly eloquent Clay, to reconcile the seeming contradiction between patriotism and pessimism, Fuller drew heavily upon her gift for performative flair. As numerous historical and literary scholars have emphasized, by 1844 debates

over the “Indian question” involved lofty, sentimental language that all too often conveniently intensified in direct proportion to Native Americans’ degree of physical removal. As I noted in the previous chapter, however, many such studies of white Americans’ response to Indian Removal reflect an erroneous—and oddly presentist—tendency to dismiss associations of sentimental critique with actual, meaningful protest. No less than abolitionists, temperance and prison reformers, and women’s rights advocates (to name but four of the era’s numerous popular social causes), white Americans sympathetic to the Indians often deployed sentimental rhetorics in a deliberate attempt to sadden, shock, and outrage audience sensibilities.⁷ Such registers were particularly suited to an era in which Americans “expected such masters of symphonic speaking as Webster and Calhoun to deliver waves of emotion from *piano* to *fortissimo* with plenty of *vibrato* along the way”; even if it is true that today, we detect “something ridiculous about the gesticulating man with stentorian voice, pouting and preening and all but weeping” (Delbanco 171), distinctions between serious argument and over-the-top performance were often blurred in the antebellum political sphere.

Counter-imperial argumentation was often synonymous with hyperbolic performance, requiring graphically-detailed accounts of conquered and conqueror alike suffering physical, moral, and spiritual degradation. Easy to appropriate but seemingly impossible to translate into practice, these appeals persistently lost out in the spectacle of territorial expansion occurring throughout the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s. But such discourse also planted an ineradicable, destabilizing dynamic into white antebellum America’s mainline triumphalist narrative; and in the performance of destabilizing

rhetoric, no politician of the expansion era surpassed Clay. During the 1830s he petitioned fellow congressmen on behalf of the Cherokee Indians in their dispute with Georgia, and a survey of these speeches alone testifies to Clay's "enormous verbal skills as well as his ferocious intellectual power and energy," all of which "explain to a very large extent his extraordinary position of authority in Congress and the fascination he exerted on everyone, male and female" (Remini 477). In February 1835 Clay and Fuller's friend Harriet Martineau witnessed one such performance, and in *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838) wrote glowingly of what she had seen:

I never saw so deep a moral impression made by a speech. The best testimony to this was the general disgust excited by the empty and abusive reply of the Senator from Georgia [. . .] I saw tears, of which I am sure he was wholly unconscious, falling on his papers as he vividly described the woes and injuries of the aborigines. I saw Webster draw his hand across his eyes; I saw everyone deeply moved except two persons—the Vice-president, who yawned somewhat ostentatiously, and the Georgia senator, who was busy brewing his own storm. (298-299)

When it came to Native American peoples, at least, then-Vice President Van Buren apparently worried little that the United States might capitulate to the "lust of power" that he would warn against nine years later. But Martineau's account of Clay's other numerous auditors points up a susceptibility to counter-imperial argument that spanned

partisan and sectional divides, and which a sufficiently skilled speaker could press to great effect.

Talk was also a strong suit of Margaret Fuller's. In the long obituary appearing four days after her death, Greeley observed that his friend conversed "so profoundly and admirably, that she was characterized as 'the best talker since De Stael'" (quoted in Reavis 540). Her famed Boston Conversations of the late 1830s and early 1840s attracted leading female intellectuals, abolitionists, and social luminaries including Lydia Maria Child, Louisa Gilmore Loring, Ann Green Phillips, Maria White, Lidian Emerson, Sophia Ripley, Julia Ward Howe, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. So impressed with these sessions was Sophia Hawthorne, she referred to Fuller as "'My Priestess!' in a sonnet," and not long afterwards a jealous Nathaniel Hawthorne expressed a "curious wish that 'Miss Fuller might lose her tongue!'" (Capper 89-90). Having met her at the Conversations as well as at Brook Farm, Mary Chaney Greeley quickly befriended Fuller and brought her to Horace's attention (Williams, *Horace Greeley* 78).

But one of the most succinct testimonials to Fuller's conversational prowess belongs to Emerson, who gushed in a March 1843 journal entry: "She has great sincerity, force, and fluency as a writer, yet her powers of speech throw her writing into the shade [. . .] You cannot predict her opinion. She sympathizes so fast with all forms of life, that she talks never narrowly or hostilely nor betrays, like all the rest, under a thin garb of new words, the old droning castiron opinions or notions of many years standing" (*Journals* 303). Celebrating the anti-doctrinal flexibility with which her talk comprehended multiple views, Emerson in a sense anticipated the direction Fuller

scholarship would eventually take regarding her *literary* style. Three influential critics, Steele, Annette Kolodny, and Julie Ellison have all shown that Fuller used multivocal prose to further her women's rights advocacies.⁸

By the same token, Fuller's polyvocal writing served to powerfully communicate her counter-imperial sensibilities when, shortly after *Summer*'s publication, she signed on with the *Tribune*. In his indispensable treatment of her early *Tribune* days, Fuller biographer Charles Capper writes that when Greeley brought her in he was recovering from producing months of "unceasing pro-Henry Clay editorials [which] had eclipsed nearly everything else, only to leave him mortified" by Polk's victory. "So to revitalize his paper, as well as, he hoped, his party," Capper continues, Greeley "had recently returned with redoubled energy to social crusading. And to [. . .] shore up his cultural front, he had hired Fuller, who, he boasted, in his prospectus published the week after the disastrous presidential election, was 'already eminent in the higher walks of Literature' and one of America's best writers" (197). While Fuller's *Tribune* installments hardly parroted Greeley's politics down the line, they did promote many causes for which he continued to fight in the wake of the Whigs' defeat, including his abolitionism, his working-class sympathies, and perhaps most of all, his (and Clay's) fierce anti-nativism. Similarly, while writing for the *Tribune*, Fuller regularly depicted the racial and international Other with a degree of transcultural sympathy—or in Capper's words, a "multiethnic liberal cosmopolitan patriotism" (259)—today not often associated with the mainstream journalistic logos of 1840s America.

In January 1845 Fuller rejected nativists' fears of the burgeoning immigrant tides, declaring instead: "'We do want that each nation needs to hear from those of her compatriots, able to guide and enlighten them [. . .] Let nothing be obliterated, but all regenerated'" (quoted in Capper 258-259). And in a June review of Charles Wilkes's multivolume *United States Exploring Expedition*, rightly anticipating that the work would soon be "mined for evidence of the inherent inferiority of savage 'races,'" Fuller offered the preemptive rebuke: "'Would you speak to a man, first learn his language!'" (Capper 268). On the following New Years' Day, of course, appeared her acerbic editorial attacking slavery, annexation, and what she regarded to be an increasing pattern of mob censorship. Such early *Tribune* writings, spelled out with a directness befitting the paper's political slant, recapitulated a core anti-doctrinal perspectivism that had been integral to Fuller's thinking in the period leading up to her journey westward..

While editor of the *Dial* she had championed diversity of thought, and worried in an 1842 letter to Emerson that, as her successor, he would ideologically homogenize the journal. "I think you will sometimes reject pieces that I should not," she chided her friend, adding: "you have always had in view to make a good periodical and represent your own tastes, while I have had in view to let all kinds of people have freedom to say their say, for better, for worse" (*Letters* III. 58). Fuller's openness to divergent views and standards was not limited to the comparatively mild aesthetic conflict troubling a New England literary journal, however. She was equally ready to assert the legitimacy of cultures and even entire value systems alien to her experience; on this account, later in 1842 she charged the pacifistically inclined Reverend Channing with betraying a falsely

triumphalist hubris: “I was surprised to hear you speak on in your sermon as if the extent of the Christian triumph proved its superiority,” she wrote, adding “that of other faiths is numerically greater; and their hold as strong in the nations they rule” (*Letters* III. 67).

Together with her interest in performing voice and point of view, the transcultural attitude underlying Fuller’s critiques of Emerson and Channing made her in many ways an ideal candidate to breach the confines of her familiar New England universe and acquaint herself with a region “then considered the far western frontier,” and the journey to which “was a difficult one and not without some dangers” (Belasco Smith vii-viii). Though Wisconsin, for example, was formally United States’ territory when she went there, readers would have perceived nothing odd in Fuller’s reference to Mackinaw Island as a “nation” (*Summer* 145). Featuring exotic landscapes, replete with unconventional modes of living, and populated by Indian tribes, American settlers, and immigrants whose origins spanned the globe, the western frontier in 1844 very much bordered on foreign territory status in the American imagination.

“Wild Dances and Sudden Song”: Transculturalism in *Summer on the Lakes*

On her return from the Great Lakes, Fuller’s preparation for writing *Summer on the Lakes* and her manner of textual arrangement were themselves indicative of an alignment with counter-imperial thinking. Rather than acquiescing to a ready-made, Anglo-triumphalist narrative of the American West, she put herself in a position to consider the region and its momentous happenings from multiple viewpoints, many of which were opposite her own. Early in *Summer*, Fuller tells her readers, “I read all the

books I could find about the new region” (19) and follows this claim with a review essay of popular frontier authors including George Catlin, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Anna Jameson, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Thomas Loraine McKenney. In the book’s penultimate chapter she lays out a succession of references, anecdotes, and quotations drawn from these and other ostensible authorities, including three women authors on whose reports she depended for information on the condition of Indian women.⁹ Writing Emerson from Cambridge, Fuller highlighted the theoretical underpinnings of her research methodology: “I like now to go over the ground with [the old travelers] and shall not continue my own little experiences till I have done with theirs.” Connecting her work at Harvard back to their old quarrel over the direction of the *Dial*, she added, “[y]ou go on a different principle; you would have every thing in it good according to your taste, which is in my opinion, though admirable as far as it goes, far too narrow in its range [. . .] I wish my tastes and sympathies still more expansive than they are, instead of more severe. Here we differ” (*Letters* III. 160-161).

But just as important as establishing intertextual dialogue with the voices of other frontier writers were Fuller’s converse measures to prevent those voices from colonizing her own. Only after seeing the West firsthand did she immerse herself in literatures purporting to delineate the character of the region and its inhabitants; in a letter to her traveling companions James and Sarah Clarke also composed during the early research stages, she explained her approach, expressing a renewed appreciation for “the difference between hearing and seeing [. . .] much that I seemed to know before,” she observed, “has never been truly mine, till I had such limited means of observation as this

summer has afforded. Now I have some inkling of what is meant by the West, and what its prospects and tendencies are” (*Letters* VI. 349-350). According to the lion’s share of what she read at Harvard, of course, what was “meant by the West” was an exotic site awaiting Anglo-American conquest.

Albeit to varying degrees of severity, the corpus of Fuller’s reading suggested, as Richard Slotkin has written of Turner’s “Frontier Thesis,” a “one-directional relationship between the ‘Metropolis,’ the civilizational center; and the ‘Wilderness,’ into which the heroic energies of the Metropolis are projected” (*Fatal Environment* 41). Time and again in the burgeoning frontier literatures of the period, the “heroic energies” of the East arrived on the western frontier by way of charming, verbose narrators and fictional characters who cultivated and satisfied a public yearning for adventure and the untamed, and effused praise for white America’s benignly civilizing westward march. At the same time, these big-talking literary personae reflected the controversial tenor of the times in which they appeared, punctuating their mainline triumphalism with aside-like descriptions and passages suggestive of a deep-seated desire to protest the very processes they were heralding.

Much of the drama of *Summer on the Lakes* inheres in the striking degree to which Fuller rescues this desire from the unstable margins and places it at the center of her mainline narrative. Beginning with Fuller’s tone-setting, opening-scene condemnation of the tourist who unceremoniously spits into Niagara Falls “with an air as if thinking how he could best appropriate it to his own use” (5), *Summer on the Lakes* rejects prevailing notions of a “one-directional” West in favor of a sustained conviction,

also initially expressed at the Falls, that everything she encounters on the frontier will provide “to the faithful observer its own standard by which to appreciate it” (4). If the Niagara spitter stands in for an experience of unfamiliar terrain that is limited to utilitarian thinking, Fuller’s response to the same landscape signals to readers that her own summer on the lakes will come across as a series of open-ended exchanges among myriad perspectives, voices, and narrative modes. Throughout *Summer*, Fuller’s sense of traveling in and writing about the West presents a glaring contrast to popular notions of a site awaiting checkerboard demarcation by federal land laws, and to which “settlers [. . .] could plan their migration by using handbooks” (Tonkovich 84).

Fuller’s account of traversing the Illinois prairies exhibits a multidirectional approach to spatial movement that is in many ways exemplary of *Summer*’s larger textual arrangement. “In this country,” she reflects shortly after gaining the prairies from Chicago, “it is as pleasant to stop as to go on, to lose your way as to find it, for the variety in the population gives you a chance for fresh entertainment in every hut, and the luxuriant beauty makes every path attractive” (25). A few pages later, Fuller and her companions attempt a more handbook-spirited jaunt when a settler offers to show them “a ‘short cut,’ by which we might, to especial advantage, pursue our journey.” The path they wind up following, however, proves as unpleasant as it is ineffective, leaving them to turn for ‘directions’ to the example of the Black Hawks: “At last, after wasting some two or three hours on the ‘short cut,’ we got out by following an Indian trail” (31). Towards the end of the same section, in what has become one of the book’s most oft-quoted passages, she rejects rigidly linear modes of spatial engagement: “I had no

guidebook, kept no diary, do not know how many miles we traveled each day, nor how many in all. What I got from the journey was the poetic impression of the country at large; it is all I have aimed to communicate” (42).

As editors and critics from its moment of publication through the present have been quick to point out, the persistently unlinear, polyvocal manner with which Fuller conveys this “poetic impression” of the West also renders *Summer on the Lakes* the least immediately accessible of her published writings. Though proceeding in loose chronological accord with her two-month journey, the travel narrative proper constitutes only a single refrain within a cacophony that includes: illustrations by Sarah Clarke; poems, most of which are borrowed from unidentified sources; a dramatized transcript of a political speech; dialogues both real and imagined; prose sketches of Indians, settlers, politicians, and soldiers; references to popular and classical literature; a long, speculative account of Justinus Kerner’s *The Seeress of Prevorst* (1829); and, shot throughout the text, numerous reflective commentaries on the function and meaning of white America’s westward advance. Given this scope of narrative gear-shifting, it is little wonder that even the most sympathetic editors (Fuller’s brother Arthur among them) have come away from *Summer* complaining, in Joel Myerson’s words, that “less than half the book actually dealt with the subject matter promised by its title” (quoted in Urbanski, 146-147). But the problem with such an approach to *Summer on the Lakes*, as more recent critics have demonstrated, is that much of what Fuller’s book has to say only becomes available through meeting it on its own rhetorical terms.

Susan Belasco Smith has pointed out that one excellent figuration of these terms appears courtesy of Fuller herself, with her opening-sentence invitation for readers to “share with me such foot-notes as may be made on the pages of my life during this summer’s wanderings” (3). The text’s “miscellaneous character,” writes Belasco Smith, “follows the tradition of portfolio and sketchbook writing that began at the turn of the nineteenth century and was largely an art form practiced by women” (xii, xiv). Applying a more androgynous reading to Fuller’s hodge-podge compositional style, William Stowe argues that the appeal of the travel-writing genre to Fuller was that it enabled her to “speak in a number of voices, male and female, marked and unmarked, real and fictional” (106). And Michaela Bruckner Cooper rightly observes that over the course of *Summer*, “traveling becomes a trope for both physical and textual wandering,” with Fuller “embark[ing] on a textual journey among various and often mutually contesting or overlapping discourses that shape her response to the landscape and the people she encounters on her trip” (173).

These and other recent insights regarding Fuller’s use of generic convention, her thematic overlappings of vocality with spatial movement, and especially her immersion in “mutually contesting” discourses, have in many ways laid the groundwork for my own reading of *Summer on the Lakes* according to the antebellum United States’ effort to reconcile oppositional impulses and arguments surrounding westward expansion. To an extent, such a reading also intersects with Annette Kolodny’s identification of *Summer* with literary practices by which many women writers of the antebellum era, rather than projecting fantasies of “[m]assive exploitation and alteration of the

continent” (*The Land Before Her* xiii), instead performed communitarian and comparatively eco-friendly responses to the West. As attested by the 1844 election, however, competing attitudes towards westward expansion ultimately broke far less along gendered lines than according to broader ideological positions on Indian Removal, annexation, and slavery—all of which issues continually exacerbated anxieties with which antebellum America regarded its presence on the international stage. Reflective of a big-talking national narrative forced to negotiate between the warrants of Empire on the one hand and republican ideals on the other, *Summer on the Lakes* upended convention by overwhelmingly privileging the latter.

Fuller’s polyvocal arrangement both mitigates her own vulnerability to Anglo-triumphalist thinking and facilitates her mainline assertions of counter-imperial allegiance. The former, negative capacity initially comes into play when at Niagara, Fuller depicts herself beset by fears of lurking, demonic Indians. Ironically in the same paragraph where she claims to have discovered the Falls’ “own standard by which to appreciate it,” and thus apprehended the “full wonder of the scene,” Fuller finds her imagination momentarily hijacked by a culturally-wrought “illusion”:

I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force, with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, images, such as never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks; again and again this

illusion recurred, and even after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me. (4)

With this her first reference to Native Americans in a book that is in many ways about them, Fuller evokes a popular justification for their systemic removal.¹⁰ But while her inclusion of the passage betrays Fuller's inability to prevent her reveries from underwriting this expansionist warrant, she also manages to controvert it through the big-talking quality of her writing. To begin with, immediately on invoking the all-too-familiar and frightful image, she marginalizes it as "unsought and unwelcome." It is significant, too, that she abandons the subject as abruptly as it had come into being; breaking into a new paragraph to pick up where she had left off before the interruption—"As picture, the Falls can only be seen from the British side"—she digresses once again, but this time into her indictment of the Niagara spitter.

A few pages later, and most importantly in terms of countering the effects of these hallucinatory Indians, Fuller depreciates the acts of violence through which the Falls were conquered. To this latter end she enlists the aid of Seba Smith's satiric and highly popular fictional creation, Jack Downing, who she claims "told us all about the Americanisms of the spectacle; that is to say, the battles that have been fought here" (6). Cut from the same mold from which James Russell Lowell would derive his antislavery and antiwar Yankee hero at the center of *The Biglow Papers* (1848), Jack Downing during the 1830s had "emerged in a new rôle" as Andrew Jackson's comedic and salt-of-the-earth oracular friend, beneath whose "placid stream of talk ran a drastic criticism of

the Jacksonian democracy,” and through whose colloquial ramblings Van Buren and other prominent Jacksonians were routinely mocked (Rourke 29-30). Fuller, then, elects to reference the history of the Indians’ forcible banishment from Niagara through one of the era’s most recognizable literary big talkers, and in doing so gestures towards the ambivalence of Americans—for whom Downing is an “acute and entertaining representative”—regarding Jackson’s (and by extension Polk’s) controversial methods of pursuing expansion. The ironic presence of Downing reinforces Fuller’s move to disassociate military conquest from glory, and to instead imagine the Falls’ violent history as a testimony to an unfortunate truth: “It seems strange that men could fight in such a place; but no temple can still the personal griefs and strifes in the breast of its visitors” (6).

Along much the same lines as the fictional creations of Smith before her and Lowell four years later, Fuller in *Summer on the Lakes* worries that the true source of promise for America—its people—also holds the potential for bringing about its moral and spiritual degradation. She drives this troublesome point home in the following paragraph, which begins: “No less strange is the fact that, in this neighborhood, an eagle should be chained for a plaything.” It is neither hostile Indians nor colonial Europeans, but rather American citizens who vulgarly abuse their own great symbol of liberty, addressing it “with the language they seem to find most appropriate to such occasions—that of thrusts and blows” (6-7). By surrounding her invocation of “naked savages” with admiration for the natural environment and expressed anger at its abusive appropriation

by the whites, she isolates the denigrating racial stereotype, denying it momentum in the narrative.

Fuller's account of the Illinois prairies likewise deploys polyvocality to overcome her acknowledged susceptibility to hardline expansionist doctrine. She leads into this section with an enthusiastic treatment of the Chicago flora, telling readers: "I enjoyed a sort of fairyland exultation, never felt before, and the first drive amid the flowers gave me anticipation of the beauty of the prairies." But over the next several paragraphs Fuller struggles to apprehend intrinsic value in the land spread out before her. "At first," Fuller writes,

the prairie seemed to speak of the very desolation of dullness. After sweeping over the vast monotony of the lakes to come to this monotony of land, with all around a limitless horizon,—to walk, and walk, and run, but never climb, oh! it was too dreary for any but a Hollander to bear. How the eye greeted the approach of a sail, or the smoke of a steamboat; it seemed that anything so animated must come from a better land, where mountains gave religion to the scene. (22)

Barely a decade removed from the Black Hawk war of 1832, this expressed longing for markers of American civilization and industry in an empty landscape reverberates with one of expansionists' common grievances: "very few Indians kept immense resources to themselves, refusing to let the large numbers of willing and eager white Americans make

what they could of those resources [. . .] The West, in the most common figure of speech, had to be ‘opened’—a metaphor based on the assumption that the virgin West was ‘closed,’ locked up, held captive by Indians” (Limerick 46). From an environmental standpoint, too, the passage appears to underscore Richard White’s sweeping observation that for most nineteenth-century white Americans, “nature existed largely as a collection of commodities [. . .] Logically enough, they valued plants, animals, and minerals according to their utility, and to call something useless was to question its right to exist in a human-dominated environment” (212).

Yet far from dovetailing with anti-Indian rhetoric and an urge towards environmental depletionism, Fuller’s candidly-acknowledged, original indifference to the scantily-developed prairies is quickly transformed into a call for intellectual growth: “I began to love because I began to know the scene, and shrank no longer from ‘the encircling vastness.’” Building on the lesson she had already derived from Niagara, Fuller continues:

It is always thus with the new form of life; we must learn to look at it by its own standard. At first, no doubt, my accustomed eye kept saying, if the mind did not, What! No distant mountains? what, no valleys? But after a while I would ascend the roof of the house where we lived, and pass many hours, needing no sight but the moon reigning in the heavens, or starlight falling upon the lake, till all the lights were out in the island

grove of men beneath my feet, and felt nearer heaven that there was
nothing but this lovely, still reception on the earth. (22)

Here Fuller performs a spirited argument with herself over the meaning and value of a scene alien to any she has encountered, and privileges an imaginative faculty unlimited by doctrinal notions of progress. The principle on which she relies to embrace the Falls and the prairies alike—that is, her willingness to adapt her thinking—itself places her book in opposition to expansionist mandates for transfiguring the West to meet preexisting standards of utility and beauty. Establishing such a value system for the consideration of unfamiliar landscapes, Fuller anticipates her transcultural engagement with unfamiliar human beings.

Both Fuller's disarmament of imaginary "naked savages" and her performed reconception of the prairies leave the counter-imperial flow of the narrative intact heading into *Summer's* middle chapters. Her arrangement essentially inverts the Big Talk through which popular frontier writers routinely submerged outbursts of counter-imperial sensibility within broader narratives that fully underwrote predominant Anglo-American triumphalist discourses. Two of the era's most iconic fictional Indians, Cooper's Chingachook and Sedgwick's Magawisca, provided antebellum readers with outlets for sympathetic outrage at the brutal realities of expansion.¹¹ But the poignant sense of injustice that these characters communicate is relegated to the level of emotional subtext; scions of Indian nobility, Cooper and Sedgwick's Indians are necessarily disappeared from the triumphant historical trajectories that the authors are

primarily invested in describing. *Summer on the Lakes* performs a dramatic upending of this hierarchal arrangement, marginalizing popular expansionist memes and shifting oppositional impulses to the center of her western narrative.

During the lengthy middle section overlapping her descriptions of Illinois and Wisconsin, Fuller inserts the story of Mariana, whose victimization brings to a head the counter-imperial critiques preceding it, and sets the stage for those flooding the book's final chapters. Like so much of the material in *Summer*, the story of Mariana appears by way of association. During her last days in Illinois, Fuller encounters Mariana's aunt at a Springfield hotel, learns of her tragic fate, and shares her story with readers. A girl of mixed race sent from the West to be "Americanized" at a boarding school in the northeast, initially Mariana had inspired the love and admiration of everyone around her. Yet the same qualities that had initially drawn her schoolmates to Mariana—her extroverted nature, her unwillingness to conform, and above all her *strangeness*—eventually move them to resentment, and they successfully conspire to publicly humiliate her. Broken-spirited, Mariana devolves into a duplicitous schemer who delights in spreading gossip and false rumors throughout the school. Though all finally turns out to be forgiven and peace restored, she leaves then school fundamentally altered—in Fuller's words, "a wonderfully instructed being, though in ways those who had sent her forth to learn little dreamed of" (58). Shortly afterward, she falls in love with and marries Sylvain, a worldly type who increasingly judges her unfavorably against conventional standards of womanhood. Overcome by loneliness and despair, Mariana dies.

As a figuration for the American West, Mariana's function in *Summer on the Lakes* is twofold. First, a strong ecocritical element underpins the failures of the boarding-school and Sylvain towards Mariana, whose descriptions ripple with analogies to the natural environment.¹² Indeed, Fuller repeatedly gestures towards eliding distinctions between her heroine and the space she occupies, as in the scene preceding Mariana's humiliation in the school cafeteria, when the unsuspecting girl lingers "on the balcony, lost in gazing on the beautiful prospect [. . .] Pure blue were the heavens, and the same hue of pure contentment was in the heart of Mariana" (53). Claiming to love Mariana but longing to effect a fundamental change in her nature, school and husband alike manifest what Lee Rozelle has recently identified as "a dilemma in nineteenth-century American culture, one that involved the use of romantic rhetoric to etherealize natural space while killing it. Lofty tones that accompanied the language of western expansion thinly mask the impulse to murder and devour the beloved" (12). Addressing the disharmonies between Sylvain and Mariana, Fuller explicitly likens the latter to a natural landscape that, while ostensibly "beloved," in truth becomes an object of unrelenting exploitation: "Mariana was a very intellectual being, and she needed companionship. This she could only have with Sylvain, in the paths of passion and action [. . .] He loved to have her near him, to feel the glow and fragrance of her nature, but cared not to explore the little secret paths whence that fragrance was collected" (59). Posing a lethal contrast to Fuller's argument that in the West "it is as pleasant to stop as to go on, to lose your way as to find it," Sylvain occupies Mariana as a "short cut"

whose value he measures—in the end unflatteringly—to the extent that it enables his own increased social status and material enrichment.

But while his neglectful and exploitative attitude ultimately “devours” Mariana, Sylvain only completes a process that had begun at the boarding school. When her schoolmates mock her love for theatrical makeup by appearing in the cafeteria “deeply rouged” and “with a suppressed smile distorting every countenance,” they demarcate and entrap Mariana, as though with lines on a map, within the confines of an exaggeratedly simplistic signifier. Moreover, though perpetrated by the citizen/students at the school, Mariana’s public humiliation bears the mark of institutional sanction. “The teachers,” states Fuller, “strove to be grave, but she saw they enjoyed the joke. The servants could not suppress a titter [. . .] Our little girl was quite unprepared to find herself in the midst of a world which despised her, and triumphed in her disgrace” (53-54). Appearing in a book apprehensive of what Rozelle identifies as America’s simultaneously worshipful and destructive response to the frontier, the passage that follows takes on an environmentally-charged tonality. Just as the West reigned in the antebellum American imagination, Mariana had also:

ruled, like a queen, in the midst of her companions; she had shed her animation through their lives, and loaded them with prodigal favors, nor once suspected that a powerful favorite might not be loved. Now, she felt that she had been but a dangerous plaything in the hands of those whose hearts she had never doubted. (54)

Significantly, the truth that Mariana realizes in this passage proves as destructive to the character of her betrayers as it is to the girl herself. One who had been regarded as “always new, and always surprising” (51), is suddenly transformed into fertile ground for the “seeds of dissension, till there was scarce a peaceful affection, or sincere intimacy in the circle where she lived, and could not but rule, for she was one whose nature was to that of others as fire to clay” (55).

The breakdown in camaraderie between the schoolgirls parallels the strident sectional and ideological divisions over expansion that were in many ways reflected by the 1844 presidential campaign. Further, the callousness that increasingly informs the schoolmates’ behavior towards one another reflects Limerick’s description of social conditions on the western frontier: “In the broad sweep of Western history, it may look as if a united social unit called ‘white people’ swept Indians off their lands; that group [. . .] was not a monolith at all but a complex swirl of people as adept at preying on each other as at preying on Indians” (51). Preceding the Mariana section, Fuller often vents her frustrated sense that too many Americans in the West, notwithstanding their high-flown rhetorics about the promise of the region, wind up degrading that promise—and by extension themselves and one another—by surrendering to what she considers their single-minded pursuit of material gain. During the trip from Buffalo to Chicago, her “first feeling that I really approached the West” quickly gives way to her despair at overhearing the acquisitionist talk of the passengers. “They had brought with them,” she complains, “their habits of calculation, their cautious manners, their love of polemics [. . .] talking not of what they should do, but of what they should get in the new scene [. . .]”

there is nothing real in the freedom of thought at the West, it is from the position of men's lives, not the state of their minds" (12-13).

Fuller falls in love with Illinois, but she finds the settlers' lives there only slightly less disheartening than the story of Mariana. In a way that trenchantly anticipates Mariana's experience at the boarding school, Fuller harshly estimates the settlers' educational practices: "Their grand ambition for their children is to send them to school in some eastern city, the measure most likely to make them useless and unhappy at home." A healthy education, argues Fuller, is only possible to the extent that it complements the setting in which it occurs: "I earnestly hope that, ere long, the existence of good schools near themselves, planned by persons of sufficient thought to meet the wants of the place and time, instead of copying New York or Boston, will correct this mania" (39). Instead of being sent away and forcibly molded according to the idea of an eastern lady (as was mistakenly done with Mariana), Fuller insists that the girl of Illinois, if allowed to develop of a piece with her surrounding element, could attain an elegance "of a kind new, original, enchanting, as different from that of the city belle as that of the prairie torchflower from the shopworn article that touches the cheek of that lady within her bonnet" (39-40). Rather than attending faux-ballroom parties, frequenting "milliners shops," and learning to play the piano, such a girl should take up the "guitar, or some portable instrument" (40), learn to sing, and spend as much time as possible exercising outdoors. Fuller's expressed fear is that the emigrants will persist in their willful ignorance of what the West has to offer.

This wish for the settlers to overcome their avarice and urge to imitate Eastern mores—and instead embrace the West as a site for moral and spiritual enlargement—is powerfully reconfigured in her anticipation of the man who will appreciate “such women as Mariana”:

When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs; no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous for the use of human implements. A man religious, virtuous, and sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom the world is no mere spectacle, or fleeting shadow, but a great solemn game to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. (64)

The challenge Mariana poses dovetails with that posed by the West as Fuller represents it; like the region Fuller has traveled, Mariana represents a new cultural standard whereby intellectual and spiritual growth are not subordinated to baseline material goals. Sylvain’s destruction of Mariana is tantamount to such a subordination; indeed, no less than the settlers whose “progress is Gothic” and who will soon “obliterate the natural

expression of the country” (29), Sylvain sacrifices all else to his desire for “business in the world” and for “careless shining dames” (59-60).

Fuller’s hypothetical “man” both echoes and radically overhauls the arguments with which Clay and most Whigs approached the issue of westward expansion. Ever hopeful of finding common ground for compromise between competing interests, Clay insisted that the Jeffersonians’ vision of a purely agrarian nation was unsustainable; he championed instead an economic model through which individual regions could contribute to the nation by tapping their unique geographical, climatic, and cultural situations. Such an “American System,” Clay believed, would “‘multiply and strengthen the various and innumerable ties of commercial, social, and literary intercourse’ and thus unite ‘the various and widespread population’ of the United States” (Shankman 49-50). The ideal of economic and cultural unity through variegation, he argued, could only develop gradually—in what he considered expansionists’ mad rush to replicate across the continent, far too much territory and too many sociopolitical complications stood to be absorbed at once. While sharing Clay’s worries over sustainability, however, *Summer on the Lakes* spurns the fundamental faith in commodity culture for which his “American System” was an apt representative.

If Fuller represents agendas of economic and territorial conquest as two facets of a common avaricious impulse, her reference to the eastbound Fourierites at the end of the book suggests an alternative model for community organization: “it seemed a pity they were not going to, rather than from, the free and rich country where it would be so much easier, than with us, to try the great experiment of voluntary association” (155).

Fuller's well-known association with the Brook Farmers, as well as the educational practices with which she charges the Illinois settlers, tempts one to imagine that she projected utopian dreams onto the American West. But unlike the politicians, pundits, and social theorists vying to define the American identity at mid-century, she pulls up well short of offering doctrinal solutions to issues of westward expansion. As the Mariana section vividly illustrates, at its thematic core, *Summer* is longer on protest and critique than on soaring rhetorics of possibility.¹³

Mariana's death indicts America's environmental depletionism, but it reflects more harshly still on expansion's brutal ramifications for the racial and international Other. At the beginning of Mariana's tale, Fuller writes: "She was, on her father's side, of Spanish Creole blood" (51). The loaded term "Creole" presented Fuller's readers with a wide range of associations; as Brickhouse has noted, during the mid-century decades "Creole" could mean "a person of exclusively European descent born in the Americas, a person of African descent born in the Americas, or a person of mixed race" (130). While the "mixed race" descriptor seems most applicable to Mariana's case, her Spanish pedigree also involves the other two options, evoking the impending crisis with Mexico, which was in turn inextricable from the slavery debate. All of these political associations are further escalated by the theme of miscegenation, since Mariana is, after all, the product of a white woman's transgressive sexual union with a dark male Other. As Christina Zwarg has noted, in and of itself Mariana's congenital makeup "provokes an association between her subversive potential and the 'otherness' of the Midwest," and "entails a strangeness that Fuller also sees in the alien cultures around her" (624).

Given Mariana's explicitly-drawn Otherness, Fuller's level of apparent personal identification with this literary persona is particularly striking, and many readers from her own lifetime through the present have interpreted the Mariana section as, in Zwarg's words, "a mock autobiography" (622). To fix Mariana as a veiled self-portrayal, however, is to dismiss Fuller's polyvocal prose style; writing to Channing, Fuller raised much the same objection, asking her friend: "How canst thou be willing that any should see me as Mariana? [. . .] Imagine prose eyes, with glassy curiosity, looking out for Mariana. Nobody dreams of it being like me; they all thought Miranda was, in the Great Lawsuit. People seem to think that not more than one phase of character can be shown in life" (*Letters* III. 198-199). The people Fuller engages in *Summer on the Lakes* cover a markedly broad range of races, origins, and lifestyles, all of which come across as "phase[s]" of human "character" literally united by the common ground they occupy.

This connectedness of variegated peoples in *Summer on the Lakes* refutes the lethal sameness/difference binary that leads to Mariana's death, and upon which antebellum conquest ideologies largely depended. Viewed in political context it appears no coincidence that Fuller follows her account of Mariana's death by observing that Illinois has become "a by-word of reproach among the nations" (65); through her overtly international figuration of Mariana, Fuller draws attention to the West's centrality to the United States' tenuous moral standing in the global community, and seconds political and cultural leaders such as Clay and Frelinghuysen, who argued that "constant expansion" was synonymous with "foreign conquest—dangerous to a republic both because it elevates the military and because it undermines the moral force of the

government in the international community” (Shankman 60). Notwithstanding the United States’ tense relations with Mexico and Britain over questions of annexation, its systemic Indian Removal policy had already established a devastating marker of American imperialism. While keeping an eye towards the onset of an official war (possibly multiple wars) for territory, *Summer*’s transcultural counter-imperialism inheres primarily in its highly sympathetic treatment of the Indian.

The manner with which Fuller stifles her outburst of racialized fear at Niagara signifies her method of neutralizing anti-Indian rhetoric throughout the text. To be sure, the chapters following the Niagara scene include other warrants of Anglo-American conquest ideology—foremost among them being rhetorics of inevitability. It is thus understandable that, as Capper noted in his biography, “In one form or another, ‘savagism’ is [. . .] a label recent scholars have sometimes found handy to hang on Fuller’s Indian ruminations”; but at the same time, Capper is also right in contending that this approach to Fuller “is a serious distortion. There is no question what Fuller thinks of the popular racist metanarrative. Indeed, her disgust seems to have built as she wrote” (149). As she explores Wisconsin during the latter half of the book, Fuller’s outrage at the plight of the American Indian takes center-stage, and frequently sparks rhetoric arguably as combative as anything she would write in her European dispatches.

Early in the first Wisconsin chapter, for example, Fuller passes along her host’s account of intentionally startling an Indian who had been quietly gazing upon a burial ground, and who had responded with “a wild, snorting sound of indignation and pain, and strode away.” Upset by the settler’s utter lack of respect for the Indian’s graveside

reveries, as well as his nonchalant attitude towards having interrupted them, Fuller aligns herself squarely with the Indians' imagined perspective, declaring: "What feelings must consume their heart at such moments! I scarcely see how they can forbear to shoot the white man where he stands. But the power of fate is with the white man, and the Indian feels it" (71). Though interwoven with rhetorics of inevitability, the passage is one of several that ripples with protest at Anglo-Americans' disrespectful attitude towards and mistreatment of the Indian, and in the Mackinaw chapter she widens her attack to include white women as well: "How I could endure the dirt, the peculiar smell of the Indians, and their dwellings, was a great marvel in the eyes of my lady acquaintances; indeed, I wonder why they did not quite give me up, as they certainly looked on me with great distaste for it. 'Get you gone, you Indian dog,' was the felt, if not the breathed, expression towards the hapless owners of the soil" (113).

Fuller's gendered, racial, and national identification with the female settlers of Wisconsin are thus subsumed by the ideological divide that separates her from them. She is particularly galled by the rampant hypocrisy with which these women represent their relationship with the Mackinaw Indians. Significantly, she lays bare the imperialistic Big Talk underpinning their complaints of "adopted" Indian children: "A lady said [. . .] 'Bring up an Indian child and see if you can attach it to you.' The next moment, she expressed, in the presence of one of those children she was bringing up, loathing at the odor left by one of her people, and one of the most respected, as he passed through the room." Fuller's contempt for this model of adoptive "mothering" is exceeded only by the woman's attempt to play the victim: "When the child is grown she

will consider it basely ungrateful not to love her, as it certainly will not; and this will be cited as an instance of the impossibility of attaching the Indian” (113). As Fuller well knew, this white female settler’s attitude accurately reflected legions of authors and government officials whose rhetoric affected paternalistic kindness towards the people they were in the process of eliminating.

The Mackinaw settlers’ racist and self-congratulating way of thinking sends Fuller into a lengthy rant: “Whether the Indian could by any efforts of love and intelligence from the white man, have been civilized and made a valuable ingredient in the new state, I will not say,” she begins, emphasizing her conviction that where the Indians are concerned at least, America has crossed a moral threshold from which there might well be no turning back. In what follows, Fuller takes aim at rhetorics of United States exceptionalism as well, emphasizing a damning international context not only for the nation’s conduct towards the Indian, but towards its predominant religious conceits as well:

but this we are sure of; the French Catholics, at least, did not harm them, nor disturb their minds merely to corrupt them. The French they loved. But the stern Presbyterian, with his dogmas and his task-work, the city circle and the college, with their niggard concessions and unfeeling stare, have never tried the experiment. It has never been tried. Our people and our government have sinned alike against the first-born of the soil, and if they are the fated agents of a new era, they have done nothing—have

invoked no god to keep them sinless while they do the best of fate. (113-114)

The unfavorable comparison of the Mackinaw settlers with seventeenth-century French colonists would have struck contemporary readers as particularly stinging, as beginning with Cooper it had long been a commonplace practice to vilify French-Indian allegiances as a way to highlight the comparatively benign practices of America's British forebears. Nor was this literary motif confined to frontier fiction. Almost immediately after publishing *The Oregon Trail*, Francis Parkman would move on to take his place among the growing number of historiographers invested in intertwining "Indian hating" with Francophobia. At the same time, with the prospect of war with Mexico over Texas growing increasingly likely, anti-Catholic language was experiencing a dramatic spike in the years surrounding *Summer's* publication.¹⁴

The spiritually-fateful transgressions with which Fuller charges the American expansionists provocatively recall the protests of high-profile political figures like Frelinghuysen, as well as radical social reformers such as Garrison, Martineau, and Child. Indeed, Fuller explicitly injects abolitionist rhetoric into the midst of her tirade against the American Christian's complicity in the debasement of the Indian: "Yes! slave-drivers and Indian traders are called Christians, and the Indian is to be deemed less like the Son of Mary than they! Wonderful is the deceit of man's heart!" (114). The remaining pages of the Mackinaw chapter are similarly laced with vitriol regarding the Anglo-American conqueror of the West, at one point terming him a "half-tamed pirate"

who “avails himself, as much as ever, of the maxim, ‘Might makes right.’ All that civilization does for the generality, is to cover up this with a veil of subtle evasions and chicanery” (121). Fuller’s thoughts on the Indians—particularly in terms of the condition of the women—are by no means uncritical, but throughout she sustains a sense that the United States’ dealings with them have amounted to a lost opportunity to prove its claim to moral and political uprightness, let alone exceptionalism. The Mackinaw chapter’s flood of counter-imperial discourse anticipates, perhaps moreso than in any of her early writings, the straightforward political radicalism of Fuller’s European dispatches.

Yet it is in her treatment of performative play—especially the dance—that Fuller develops her most arrestingly counter-imperial model for engaging unfamiliar landscapes and people; indeed, through her representations of the dance in *Summer on the Lakes* Fuller communicates the West as a site of shared (as opposed to violently contested) ground. This idea is vividly expressed through her portrait of Mariana, whose “love of wild dances and sudden song, her freaks of passion and wit” (51) are prevailing characteristics. Mariana, readers are told, “had by nature the same habit and power of excitement that is described in the spinning dervishes of the East.” The passage that follows is one of the text’s most extreme representations of human Otherness:

she would spin until all around her were giddy, while her own brain, instead of being disturbed, was excited to great action. Pausing, she would declaim verse of others or her own; act many parts, with strange

catch-words and burdens that seemed to act with mystical power on her own fancy, sometimes stimulating her to convulse the hearer with laughter, sometimes to melt him to tears. When her power began to languish, she would spin again till fired to recommence her singular drama, into which she wove figures from the scenes of her earlier childhood, her companions, and the dignitaries she sometimes saw, with fantasies unknown, unknown to heaven or earth. (51-52)

Professional dancer and dance theorist Sondra Fraleigh has recently described the dervish dance of the thirteenth-century Turkish Sufis as expressive of a state where multiple modes of religious experience converge in the dancer's single consciousness. The "trance dance," Fraleigh writes, "transcends the ordinary by means of a simple movement that most anyone can do—trans/descendant global spinning. As one is annihilated in God as a result of the whirling dance, 'he sees that every tree, every plant in the garden of this world is dancing, touched by the spring breath of love.' In dancing the body reveals a play of natural powers and cultural strivings" (53). Like the dancers Fraleigh describes, Mariana's spinning creates a centripetal effect by which discordant elements are woven into a unified narrative whole.

Not only her racialized Otherness, but also her style of performance renders Mariana a composite of the American West's "play of natural powers" and especially that of its "cultural strivings." But though the Mariana section stands out as its centerpiece, Fuller's dance motif operates as a connective theme throughout *Summer on*

the Lakes. Working in concert with the lyric and narrative poems strung throughout the book, as well as with its several dramatized dialogues, *Summer*'s numerous dance scenes and reference to the dance associate movement in the West with a rhythmic complexity unaccounted for by the Turnerian model of unrelenting linearity. Through the language of dance, Fuller explores what Fraleigh calls "the political terrain of movement" (3); that is, the dance motif in *Summer on the Lakes* communicates a breadth of desires, emotions, and situational responses that tie Anglo-Americans, European immigrants, and Native Americans together in their shared humanity.

For the New Englanders and New Yorkers who have settled the town of Oregon, Illinois, dance provides an outlet for expressing the patriotism and hopefulness often associated with expansion, but it also marks off the homesickness and cultural baggage that severely limit their prospects. Concluding their Fourth of July celebration Fuller relates how she and the settlers, beneath a flag "prettier than any president ever saw," toasted "the health of their country and all mankind, with a clear conscience," after which "dance and song" wound up the day" (37). But shortly after, she takes a far less enthusiastic view: indexing the female settlers' unfitness for the region, she complains that they continue to behave as "'ornaments of society.' They can dance, but not draw" (39). Her subsequent recommendation that the women relinquish the cumbersome piano for portable instruments, and her assertion that "music is universal language" (40) indicate that it is not their wish to dance, but their urbane, Victorian manner of dancing that is the problem. As in all aspects of their lifestyle, Fuller would have them adopt a performative mode more reflective of their new environmental and cultural situation.

By way of a Dutch girl she befriends at Sault St. Marie, Fuller learns of a mode of dance that she seems to consider refreshingly emblematic of that situation. “The Dutch girl,” she writes,

told me of a dance among the common people at Amsterdam, called the shepherd’s dance. The two leaders are dressed as shepherd and shepherdess; they invent to the music all kinds of movements, descriptive of things that may happen in the field, and the rest were obliged to follow. I have never heard of any dance which gave such free play to the fancy as this. French dances merely describe the polite movements of society; Spanish and Neapolitan, love; the beautiful Mazurkas, &c., are war-like or expressive of wild scenery. But in this one is great room for fun and fancy. (146)

Though Fuller does not get the opportunity to see this dance performed, its function as an outgrowth of natural experience hearkens back to her earlier-expressed hope that the girl of Illinois will “grow up with that strength of body, dexterity, simple tastes, and resources that would fit them to enjoy and refine the western farmer’s life” (39). Still, for all the exuberance of Fuller’s language in describing the “shepherd’s dance,” a profound element of loneliness and even displacement also accompanies this moment in the text. Whether the girl whose memory Fuller relays is accompanied by her family, or even fellow Dutch emigrants, is not revealed. In a real sense, the dance that the girl

remembers, as well as the “affectionate regard” she so quickly develops for Fuller, establishes a connection between her and the Illinois women who, afflicted by homesickness and a lack of belonging, cling to their pianos and memories of Broadway.

Comparing the Dutch dance with that practiced by the French, Spanish, and Mazurkas (Polish) respectively, Fuller foregrounds the internationalist contours of her project. Similarly, in the *Seeress* section, Fuller relates Kerner’s account of German children who, chronically afflicted with a nervous disorder, enact a paroxysmal dance of the sick and the damned; fortunately, and unlike the fourteenth-century Black Plague whose dance they imitate, the children recover from these episodes unblemished. Also during the *Seeress* section, Fuller shares a “touching little passage” in which Fredericka Hauffe’s female friends, erroneously anticipating her recovery, “gr[ow] merry and began to dance.” During the performance, Hauffe “remain[s] sad and thoughtful,” and on its completion, her friends find her “in the attitude of prayer” (87). Like the dance of the children, that of the ladies resonates with the cross-continental modes of spiritualism and performativity impelling the United States, and both scenes anticipate her transcultural assertion that the story of Fredericka Hauffe bears topical relevance to the West:

Do not blame me that I have written so much about Germany and Hades, while you were looking for news of the West. Here, on the pier, I see disembarking the Germans, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Swiss. Who knows how much of old legendary lore, of modern wonder, they have already planted amid the Wisconsin

forests. Soon, soon their tales of the origins of things, and the Providence which rules them, will be so mingled with those of the Indian, that the very oak trees will not know them apart,—will not know whether itself be a Runic, a Druid, or a Winnebago oak.

(102)

Here Fuller proffers a vision of the West, not as a blank slate awaiting the rote inscription of Anglo-American civilization, but rather as a stage where various races, cultures, and religions converge to perform a kind of narrative ballet. Moreover, she not only locates the region's Native American populations in the context of this global community, but suggests theirs to be the foundational culture with which the others are "mingled."

In the final three chapters of *Summer*, Fuller's treatment of Native Americans evokes a number of spiritually and politically charged dance scenes that work to reinforce their place in a human family commonly bound, as Frelinghuysen had argued, by the "judgment of natural and unchangeable truth and justice." Just before launching into the *Seeress* section, she portrays Ottawa Indians in Milwaukee, on their way to receive their annual payments from the federal government, performing a "begging dance." Describing it as "wild and grotesque," she states that one of the Ottawa chiefs—"the finest Indian figure I saw [. . .] did not join in the dance." The political ramifications of the dance as an expression of the Indians' deprivation—as well as, relatedly, the chief's abstention from that dance, are unmistakable: "He looked

unhappy,” writes Fuller, “but listlessly unhappy, as if he felt it was of no use to strive or resist” (75). Similarly, in the Mackinaw chapter, Fuller identifies a “fine specimen” of Indian religion in a war chief whose “vow to the sun of entire renunciation” begins with prolonged fasting as well as a “sacrificial dance, involving great personal torment, and lasting several days” (141). The war chief’s response to the oppressed condition of his people strongly resembles that of Fredericka Hauffe, whose ritualized self-destruction does not begin until she is forced into an undesired marriage and subsequently “*removed*” from her beloved home to a place “low, gloomy, shut in by hills; opposite in all the influences of earth and atmosphere to those of Prevorst and its vicinity” (85, my emphasis).

Also at Mackinaw, Fuller excerpts an account of an Indian “war-dance” from English explorer Jonathan Carver’s *Three Years Travels Throughout the Interior Parts of North America* (1778):

“Looking out, I saw about twenty naked young Indians, the most perfect in their shape, and by far the handsomest I had ever seen, coming towards me, and dancing as they approached to the music of their drums [. . .] The Indians being entered, they continued their dance alternately, singing at the same time of their heroic exploits, and the superiority of their race over every other people [. . .] As each of them in dancing round passed by me, they placed their right hands over their eyes, and coming close to me,

looked me steadily in the face, which I could not construe into a token of friendship.” (139)

In sharp contrast to the mid nineteenth-century Mackinaw Indians who have been reduced to a servile dependence upon the federal government for their material subsistence, for the Native Americans that Fuller memorializes through Carver, the art of dance comes across as a vehicle for communicating pride in their national history, hostility towards the vanguard harbingers of their eventual displacement, and most importantly, a sense of ineradicable agency.

On multiple levels, Fuller’s treatment of the dance in *Summer on the Lakes* signals a radical departure from the “one-directional” advance on the frontier that so many of her contemporary literary and political figures celebrated, and to which Turner would give rapt expression in 1893. Reflecting transcultural human connectedness and an awareness of the ethical ramifications of shared space, Fuller’s use of the dance motif enhances her effort to present the West and its peoples in ways that forcefully resist, in Larry Reynolds’ words, “imperialist discourse and conquest ideology” alike. Viewed as a protest against expansionist doctrine’s hostile and unsustainable approach to humans and natural space, *Summer on the Lakes* dovetails nicely with Fraleigh’s observation, “[s]ometimes the difference between self and other dissolves, especially in our dancing and walking in tandem. The other is as conditional as the self is—not stable but changing in the many textures of relationship [. . .] Our body is not in space,” Fraleigh

continues, as though joining Fuller in a rebuke of prevailing antebellum rhetorics of Manifest Destiny: “it is of space [. . .] the body is spacious in its structure” (207-208).

Notes

1. Nearly all critics of *Summer* have recognized Fuller's expressed sympathies for the plight of the American Indian. Yet the criticism is also imbued with a sense that Fuller does not effectively challenge rhetorics of Manifest Destiny. Such arguments tend to occupy one or more of the following three categories: Fuller suffered from the lack of an available lexicon to substantively challenge rhetorics of Manifest Destiny; she subordinated her counter-imperial sensibilities to her primary advocacies for women's rights; or, as Lucy Maddox has argued, she simply parroted the rhetorics of inevitability attending the Indians' forced removal.

2. In his own Introduction to *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Donald Pease asserts that Kaplan's Introduction "uncovered as a cognitive gap in the inaugural moment of American studies the ideological disjuncture separating the diplomatic history of U.S. imperialism from academic study of the national culture *and enabling imperialism to go unrecognized as an American way of life*" (23, my emphasis).

3. See Remini, 639-641.

4. By 1844 Tyler had not only reconciled differences with Jackson, but corresponded with him freely. Indeed, Tyler acquiesced to Old Hickory's request that he not run for the Presidency as an independent, so as to avoid siphoning votes away from Polk. Tyler supported Polk openly during the campaign, citing the Texas and Oregon controversies (Remini 656, 665).

5. Albeit through narratives that underwrote Anglo-American expansionism, Cooper (whose fiction Fuller praises in *Summer on the Lakes*) achieved such wide

acclaim in part through their skill at articulating outrage at the Indians' displacement—and often from the points of view of powerfully-drawn Indian characters. Also see Chapter IV of this dissertation, which argues that in his 1849 review of *Oregon Trail*, Melville participated in a longstanding discourse that had previously been taken up with aplomb by a number of luminaries including Cooper, Catharine Sedgwick, and Washington Irving, and which eloquently represented the Indian point of view on frontier expansion. In addition to the popularity of Cooper, Sedgwick, and Irving, Americans' appreciable receptivity to these discourses were reflected by the success of authors including George Catlin, Lydia Marie Child, and John Heckwelder.

6. There is, too, the three-party dynamic of the 1844 presidential race to consider. Liberty candidate James G. Birney arguably cost Clay the White House by siphoning over 60,000 votes off of the Whigs' abolitionist flank, thereby handing Polk crucial electoral votes in New York and Pennsylvania.

7. For an excellent treatment of the relationship between sentimental rhetorics and social protest in the mid nineteenth-century, see Stephen Hartnett's "Fanny Fern's 1855 *Ruth Hall*, the Cheerful Brutality of Capitalism, & the Irony of Sentimental Rhetoric."

8. In *Delicate Subjects*, for example, Ellison notes that that *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is characterized by "movement between allegorical allusions and multivocal performances" (277). This strategy, she argues, "performs reading that generates feminism" (278) rendering the text a "product of shifts between accuracy and desire, or between idealistic pluralism and feminine psychological difference" (286).

9. Jameson, Jane Schoolcraft (Henry Rowe's sister), and Anne Grant.

10. Christina Zwarg has insightfully pointed out that Fuller's "hallucination [. . .] bears a remarkable resemblance" to John Vanderlyn's painting, *The Death of Jane McCrea* (1804), which depicts two Algonquian Indians brandishing tomahawks and poised to butcher a frightened, angelic-looking white woman (618); while there is no evidence that Fuller had seen this painting, the near-exactness with which her description matches it, as well as Vanderlyn's fame at the time of her writing, strongly suggest McCrea's spectral presence on the page. Zwarg, moreover, references historian Richard Drinnon to show the far-reaching influence of Vanderlyn's painting. According to Drinnon, "Vanderlyn's painting helped set the pattern for an endless series of pictorial indictments of Jefferson's 'merciless Indian Savages.' Always the epic contrast was between dusky evil and fair innocence, between maddened red cruelty and helpless white virtue" (101). Also see Limerick's comment that while "few deaths of this kind occurred in American history with such purity," in the nineteenth-century public mind "the white woman murdered by Indians" represented the most charged of emblems—a "clear case of victimization, villainy, and betrayed innocence"—on which expansionists could rely to promote their cause (37).

11. Arguably, Cooper's most famous Indian character was Uncas, in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In the Mackinaw chapter Fuller references Uncas and Sedgwick's heroic depiction of Magawisca in *Hope Leslie*, with the insertion of an anonymous poem, "Governor Everett Receiving The Indian Chiefs, November, 1837": "Uncas and Magawisca please us still/ Unreal, yet idealized with skill;/ But every poetaster

scribbling witling,/ From the majestic oak his stylus whittling/ Has helped to tire us, and
to make us fear/ The monotone in which so much we hear/ Of ‘stoics of the wood,’ and
‘men without a tear’” (115).

12. Kolodny’s Fuller chapter in *The Land Before Her* remains the foundational treatment of the intersect in *Summer* between gender and ecological space (112-130).

13. See Zwarg for a more extensive treatment of Fourier’s thematic influence on *Summer on the Lakes*.

14. Ray Allen Billington’s *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860; A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (1938) remains an influential treatment of ways in which antebellum literatures reflected and engaged the era’s preponderance of anti-Catholic rhetoric. For a recent treatment, see Susan M. Griffin’s *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2004).

CHAPTER III
COUNTER-IMPERIAL DISSENT IN FRANCIS PARKMAN'S *THE OREGON
TRAIL**

The period spanning the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848 involved a dramatic spike in reading Americans' already healthy appetite for all things western. While frontier fiction and captivity narration continued to thrive, there emerged a comparable demand for nonfiction literatures of the West, lending a degree of popular mainstream status to previously esoteric genres including Native American ethnography, historiography, botany, and ornithology. Most prominent, however, were the travel writings, which by 1848 obtained enough currency with publishing houses and literary magazines that a *Holden's Dollar Magazine* reviewer quipped, "Everybody travels nowadays, and everybody that travels writes a book" (quoted in Johannsen 147). Appearing only a month after the conclusion of the Mexican-American war, the reviewer's comment indirectly illuminates the contested nature of the intersect between antebellum travel literatures and prevailing ideologies of conquest. If the war climactically emblemized the antebellum United States' commitment to expansionist doctrine, citizens' concurrent taste in books suggested the presence of a pervasive need to rationalize that commitment in the most benign terms

*Reprinted with permission from "Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* and the U.S.-Mexican War: Appropriations of Counter-Imperial Dissent" by Nicholas M. Lawrence, 2009. *Western American Literature*, 43.4, 373-91. Copyright [2009] by *Western American Literature*.

possible.

One such book was Francis Parkman's *The California and Oregon Trail* (1849), an exemplary artifact of the rhetorical double-dealing that informed travel literatures published during the 1830s and 1840s. While Parkman's text sustains on its surface an enthusiastic support for the United States' invasion of Mexico, it simultaneously reverberates with the negative associations and heated controversies that surrounded the nation's entrance into its first official foreign war. Written in 1846, serially released in installments of the *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1847, and finally published in book form two years later, *Oregon Trail* is in many ways reflective of the Big Talk by which antebellum ideologies of conquest engaged the counter-imperial impulse during Manifest Destiny's rhetorical heyday.

Counter-Imperial Opposition to the Mexican War

Before looking at the specifics of *Oregon Trail*'s resonance with controversies surrounding the U.S.-Mexican War, it will be helpful to begin by stressing both the presence and nature of the controversies themselves. In the first place, though the war did enjoy broad support, that support was highly problematic. If antebellum Americans' broadly-shared veneration for federalism did not so readily square with policies aimed at augmenting the potency and reach of Washington, D.C., by the same token, even those favorably inclined to a war with Mexico during this period were loathe to conceive themselves complicit with outright imperialism—a dreaded idea to be associated only with European (particularly British) monarchical rule. Indeed, as John H. Schroeder has

observed in *Mr. Polk's War*, for many in the 1840s, the war substantiated fears that “the present war of conquest promised to pervert republican principles [and] also posed a dire threat to the future existence of the Union itself. Once the unquenchable spirit of conquest had been aroused, future presidents, bent solely on personal glory and sustained by an eager populace, might well involve the nation in similar wars of aggression. Once excited, the passion would be hard to quell” (76). In response to such widespread misgivings over the meaning and ramifications of the war, proponents were persistently forced to employ justificatory tactics designed to downplay the legal and moral claims of peoples already occupying coveted lands. Similarly, war advocates were pressed to invent means of denying contradictions between their agenda and the United States’ self-proclaimed identification with individualism, liberty, and moral rectitude.

Further complicating matters, during the 1830s and the first half of the 1840s, tensions over Native Americans’ forced removal from the eastern United States were exacerbated by the great westward migrations that in many ways set the stage for war with Mexico. Given the waves of settlers and federal troops establishing themselves further and further west of the Mississippi River, it became increasingly difficult for many Americans to take seriously the assurances of federal officials and newspaper editors that Removal had been put in place as a means of protecting Native Americans from hostile whites. As we saw in the previous chapter, figures such as Henry Clay and Theodore Frelinghuysen tapped into an appreciable degree of audience receptivity to voices that would openly challenge the nation’s Indian policy as a sign of territorial

avarice and moral degradation; and increasingly, ideological divisions bred by the “Indian question” dovetailed with annexation controversies over Oregon and Texas, to the point that by the early 1840s it had become commonplace to disparage the moral and political dimensions of the United States expansionist project writ large.

It was largely in response to such aspersions that ardent expansionists “enlarged the older rationale”—liberating the North American continent with the spread of the United States’ political and religious institutions—by popularizing the notion that what they were promoting was “foreordained and inevitable” anyway (White 73). In 1845, a newspaperman, expansion enthusiast, and loyal Democratic pundit named John O’Sullivan coined the term “Manifest Destiny” with two separate editorials, both of which refuted well-known criticisms of the federal government’s territorial claims. The first of these, “Annexation,” appeared in the July-August installment of the *Democratic Review*. There, O’Sullivan glibly dismisses Mexico’s claims on Texas as an insolent attempt to check “the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (5). But it was with his essay on the equally contentious “Oregon question” that O’Sullivan injected the term into the mainstream American lexicon. On December 27th, in the pages of his *New York Morning News*, the editor declared:

Away, away with all these cobweb tissues of rights and of discovery, exploration, settlement, contiguity, etc. . . . The American claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of

the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative self-government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of air and earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth . . . It is in our future far more than in our past or in the past history of Spanish exploration or French colonial rights, that our True Title is to be found.
(quoted in White 73)

Nowhere in this editorial does O'Sullivan attempt to support his incredible claim to knowing the designs of Providence. Instead, the newspaperman "simply asserted it as a natural law that he had apparently discovered by observing what must have been an unusual forest devoted to producing one great big tree" (White 73).

But however unfounded in logic, O'Sullivan's rhetoric fired the imaginations of many in Congress. Only a week after the December editorial's appearance, Whig Representative Robert Winthrop introduced "Manifest Destiny" into the Congressional record for the first time, employing it in his defense of America's claims on Oregon. The term thenceforth came to be "openly avowed as an argument by the advocates of an aggressive policy and ridiculed by their opponents," and throughout the Mexican War, "enthusiasm for expansion at the expense of our southern neighbor served to popularize and perpetuate the phrase" (Pratt 795). In and of itself, the widespread usage of "Manifest Destiny" in late-1840s America reflexively reveals the term's necessary function as an instrument of *appeal*. In the lingering wake of the infamous Cherokee

Trail of Tears, with prospects of wars against Mexico and Britain looming, and with the slavery issue perpetually threatening to hijack any and all territorial discussions, both counter-imperial argumentation and methods for overcoming it gained significant traction in the public consciousness.

In “Civil Disobedience,” first published the same year Parkman released *Oregon Trail* in book form, Thoreau somewhat grudgingly acknowledges the plentitude of antiwar rhetoric to be found in the mid nineteenth-century popular discourse, and even goes so far as to label the United States’ invasion of Mexico “the work of comparatively a *few individuals* using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure” (my emphasis). Thoreau’s complaint about his fellow citizens is not that a plurality of them endorses invading foreign countries, eliminating Native American tribes, and holding slaves; rather, he argues that the many opposed to these and other atrocities tend, for convenience’s sake, not to act on their opposition. “Reform,” he famously laments, “keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man” (17, 26). But by implicitly attributing the failure of the Mexican War’s opponents to their general lack of “manhood,” Thoreau projects an air of heroic simplicity onto what was by definition an incredibly complex enterprise. In his Introduction to *Mr. Polk’s War*, Schroeder notes that the “general failure of American antiwar movements” across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

stems from a variety of factors. First, it is virtually impossible for antiwar groups and politicians to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. The

opposition is obviously powerless to restrain a foreign power [. . .] already bent on armed aggression. But it is also extremely difficult for critics to prevent war when the president himself seems inclined toward one. [. . .] Second, once the nation has been plunged into war, political opponents face an equally difficult problem. They must seek the means of reversing government policy without deserting or undermining American forces already under fire [. . .] In addition to lacking an effective antiwar weapon, the opposition has rarely been able to present viable alternatives to existing policy [. . .] Once on the tiger's back, one cannot dismount easily. (xii-xiii)

In the face of highly difficult circumstances, many newspapers, politicians, and private citizens did in fact strive to prevent (and later shut down) the Mexican War. That opponents of the war failed to meet their goals does not render their efforts somehow illegitimate, but rather points up the magnitude of their challenge.

The difficulties awaiting opponents of the Mexican War had been laid out clearly enough by William Ladd, in a lengthy February 1842 *Democratic Review* article entitled "The Peace Movement." There Ladd celebrates Americans' growing recognition of war as "a moral evil," which he illustrates by citing the dramatic increase in peace literatures appearing in America's libraries and periodicals (107, 113); and throughout most of the "The Peace Movement," Ladd asserts his identification with peace advocacy. Yet he also frames the movement as ultimately futile in the face of humans' propensity for

aggression, and moreover blunts his excoriation of an imperialist Great Britain—whose “floating batteries trouble the waters of the whole world”—by uncritically observing that “[t]he same red stream flows in our veins, and this Anglo-Saxon blood is pre-eminent in the annals of warfare” (109). Near the end of the article, Ladd shifts from wistfully praising the “Peace Movement” to instead underwriting its outright demonization during wartime. “A party peace organization, while the country is engaged in a fight,” he warned:

has the appearance of a traitorous combination, attacking the government when weakened by the employment of all its resources against the foreign foe [. . .] What moral right has anyone to oppose his country; to embarrass her operations, when actually engaged in war, if he holds to the right and expediency of ever fighting at all? [One] may oppose the declaration of war, but the declaration once made, it binds all whose consciences permit them to fight in any war whatever. It is supremely ridiculous to suppose that before hostilities can commence, the views of every party, and faction, and individual, can be consulted. (120-121)

Publishing his essay well before the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Mexico, Ladd at this point hardly wishes to conclude his analysis with a scathing reference to wartime treason. Transitioning into his final paragraph with jarring abruptness—“But on this retrospection we have no desire to dwell”—he writes: “We

simply desire to add our voice [. . .] for the encouragement of the nobler movement of philanthropy denoted in the title to our present article” (121). Ladd thus concludes “The Peace Movement” by reiterating his purpose of joining in an abstract call for peace.

Ladd’s ambivalent participation in debate surrounding the nation’s rising tension with Mexico was mirrored by divisions within both major political parties as well as within the growing factionalism coalescing around North and South. It is true that across the political spectrum and in much of the popular literature of the late 1840s, counter-imperial opposition to the Mexican War often revolved around worries over “contact with ‘degraded’ nonwhite races or the incorporation of more foreigners and Catholics into the nation” (Streeby 169); further, such nativist isolationism was not limited to the Northern press, as shown by a May 1846 editorial by the Democratic and pro-slavery *Charleston Mercury*, which emphasized the dangers inherent in facilitating a “copartnership [with people] at war with us by race, by language, manners and laws.” But in the same editorial, the *Mercury* also warns against “the development of a love of conquest among our people. Such passion is the enemy of liberty and law . . . Let us not cast away the priceless jewel of our freedom, for the lust of plunder and the pride of conquest” (quoted in Schroeder, 39-40).

Similarly, in 1847 Senator John Berrien, a pro-slavery Georgia Democrat who had formerly served as Attorney General under the Jackson Administration, aligned his voice with a comparatively small but outspoken contingent of Southern politicians from both parties who stood on counter-imperial principles to criticize the war. Berrien, Tennessee Whig Congressman E. H. Ewing, and others took to the floor in both

chambers of Congress to suggest that in waging a war for territory against a weaker republic, the United States risked abrogating its role as a beacon of liberty and justice to the world. “Such an exalted stature,” these politicians insisted, “demanded that the American people renounce any aggressive spirit of conquest, while demonstrating their understanding, charity, and forbearance” (Schroeder 75-76). Containing numerous such arguments that neither America’s republican institutions nor the spirit of its people were built to withstand the repercussions of empire-building, the congressional transcripts during the war years, like the *Mercury*’s editorial and even several that appeared in the *Democratic Review*, reminds us that even at Manifest Destiny’s rhetorical height, anti-war argumentation in the United States did not rest exclusively upon nativist and racist fear-mongering.

Abolitionists, peace advocates, and religious reformers fanned the flames of a vociferous counter-imperial opposition that troubled the war from its outset. On May 12, 1846, one day before the Congress officially declared war, William Lloyd Garrison’s radical American Anti-Slavery Society convened in New York for their annual meeting. The scene was dominated by rhetorics demonizing the war, President Polk, and his supporters in the North as well as the South. Speeches and absentee letters depicted slaves, Native Americans, Mexicans, and all decent white Americans as sympathetic victims of a benighted, intrinsically imperialist slave power; the minutes of this conference teem with angry appeals to “the human family,” “all men’s natural rights,” and the like. David Lee Child’s letter protested Polk’s territorial designs as so “overtopping all national profligacy, old and new, as to render the sins of the

Alexanders, the Frederics, and Napoleans, white as wool.” Abby Kelley Foster prophesied as a matter of providential righteousness that “20,000 negroes in Canada” would join Mexico’s cause, and that the “Indians who roam over the buffalo prairies of the far west; the unforgetting Indians” stood poised as well to “plant their tomahawks in the white man’s skull.” Never to be outdone, the rhetorically flamboyant Garrison railed against “a war to extirpate Christianity, to institute and cherish heathenism and to fill the continent with tyranny, pollution, and crime” (“Twelfth Annual Meeting” 82-83).

Garrison and his fellow abolitionists were the most recognizable and controversial reformers of the era, but as William Cain has noted, by the end of the 1830s “many other movements” had sprung into being to agitate for reform on a range of social and political issues that included “workers’ rights, land reform, prison reform, and women’s rights, and also the campaign for temperance and the development of religious and secular utopias” (“Prospects for Change” 222). In this context it is little surprise that during the war years, the “Peace Movement” that Ladd had ambivalently engaged in 1842 throve to an unprecedented extent. One of the most high-profile associations to carry this banner was the American Peace Society, which called for an immediate troop withdrawal from all Mexican territories, followed by nothing less than a tailoring of U.S. foreign policy to the principles of Christian pacifism. To this end the organization’s organ, the *Advocate of Peace*, throughout the duration of the war “issue[d] a spate of antiwar propaganda—sermons, speeches, poems, and petitions” (Schroeder 98). And on the outbreak of hostilities, the head of the American Peace Society, George Beckwith, offered a hefty \$500.00 prize for the author who could provide, as he would later put it

in an insert to the winning text, “the best Review of the Mexican War on the principles of Christianity, and an enlightened statesmanship” (Livermore v).

The winner of this contest, Rev. Abiel Abbot Livermore of New Hampshire, published *The War with Mexico Reviewed* in 1850, but its argument accurately reflects the rhetoric Beckwith’s Society had been trading in for years. The text condemns virtually every angle of the war, from its political subtext—“we say that we discern in slavery the mainspring” (14)—to its impact on the nation’s stateside constitution and reputation abroad, to the actions of military officers and soldiers fighting on the Mexican ground. Representative chapter titles include “The Destruction of Human Life,” “The Hospital and the Battle-Field,” “Legitimate Barbarities of the War,” “Illegitimate Barbarities,” and “Political Evils of the War at Home” (x). In the introductory chapter, Livermore states his purpose for writing the book, and with language remarkably resembling that employed by twentieth and twenty-first century Christian pacifists and antiwar activists. “But the time has now come,” he writes, “to examine the subject of war in all its aspects and all its issues; to decompose its glittering fabric of glory and its constituent elements” (3). Shortly thereafter he specifically attacks appeals to “Manifest Destiny,” observing: “The idea of a ‘destiny,’ connected with this race, has gone far to justify; if not to sanctify, many an act on either side of the Atlantic; for which both England and the United States, if nations can be personified, ought to hang their heads in shame, and weep scalding penance.” As he would continue to do throughout the book, Livermore goes on to categorize the Mexican War alongside the United States’ pattern of warfare against Native American peoples as well as its continuing tolerance of

slavery. He asserts that the Anglo-Saxon race, having violated the pacifistic dictates of the New Testament, “may, doubtless, plead the right of might; but that is far from being the might of right” (9). While along with the Garrisonian abolitionists, peace advocates such as Livermore constituted a radical fringe of antebellum American society, these reformers nonetheless succeeded in keeping their message perpetually in the public discourse.

Indeed, the spirit and even much of the language of their arguments increasingly informed the rhetorics of Whig leaders opposed to the war. Clay, whose oldest son and namesake died at the battle of Buena Vista in February 1847, continued to remind large audiences that he had opposed the war from the beginning, and insisted it would never had come to pass had he taken the White House in 1844. At a Lexington rally in November 1847, he condemned the war and slavery alike in markedly pacifistic terms. War was the most “frightful and ‘direful’” calamity that could befall any nation, Clay argued, for it “unhinges society, disturbs regular industry, and scatters poisonous seeds of disease and immorality. Its pageantry,” he observed, “glitter and pomp deceive the youthful and romantic and often make them useless to society when they return from the bloody battlefields” (Remini 692). The transcript of Clay’s speech was circulated in newspapers throughout the country, and was especially celebrated by many northern Whigs for whom Clay had “articulated all the deep sentiments and feelings pent up inside [them] about the war and what it was doing to the country” (Remini 694).

At the same time, there was no lack of Whig newspapers, politicians, and private citizens in North and South alike, who were eager to romanticize the war with all the

pomp that Livermore and Clay's words disperse—especially after the nation received reports that General Zachary Taylor (himself a prominent Whig) had crossed the Rio Grande. A fitting representative of this approving number was the “Whiggishly cool” author of *Oregon Trail*, who originally published his work in installments through the Whig *Knickerbocker Magazine* during the middle year of the war. Parkman who had voted against Polk in the 1844 presidential election, backed the war from its outset and forty years later would still “recall in all their freshness the feelings of ‘envious bitterness’ awakened by the sight in a shop window of a battle print of officers and men serving in a field battery at Buena Vista” (Doughty 120, 143). With troops on the Mexican ground and in the stateside atmosphere that Parkman's memory evokes, prominent politicians who registered their opposition to the war opened themselves to increasingly common charges of “dubious loyalty and patriotism,” and even of offering “‘aid and comfort to the enemy’” (Schroeder 91).

Yet many moderates in Congress were equal to the challenge and attacked the war with aplomb. A particularly inflammatory instance of such protest occurred in February 1847 when Senator Thomas Corwin, an Ohio Whig, delivered a speech in which he called for the total defunding of the war. No radical in the mold of his fellow Ohioan, Rep. Joshua Giddings (Giddings had submitted an absentee letter to the Garrisonians for their New York convention), Corwin over the last year had routinely “attacked abolitionists and antislavery Whigs,” while at the same time demanding “that the administration formally and immediately renounce any cession of territory from Mexico as a prerequisite of peace” (Morrison 80). All along, Corwin had staked his

opposition to the war, not as an affront to the slaveholding South, but rather on explicitly counter-imperial grounds; and the week preceding his speech generated such anticipation that by the time he entered, the Senate chamber was entirely filled with men and (contrary to Senate rules) women, many of whom had traveled long distances to hear him speak (Bochin 35).

Corwin exceeded expectations. After directing a rhetorical question to President Polk: “[w]hat is the territory you propose to wrest from Mexico?”, the Senator eloquently denied his own nation’s claims to the contested lands:

[The territory] is consecrated to the heart of the Mexican by many a well-fought battle with his old Castilian master. His Bunker Hills, and Saratogas, and Yorktowns, are there! The Mexican can say, ‘There I bled for liberty! and shall I surrender that consecrated home of my affections to the Anglo-Saxon invaders?’ [. . .] Sir, had one come and demanded Bunker Hill of the people of Massachusetts, had England’s Lion ever showed himself there, is there a man over thirteen and under ninety who would not have been ready to meet him? Is there a river on this continent that would not have run red with blood? Is there a field but would have been piled high with the unburied bones of slaughtered Americans before those consecrated battlefields of liberty should have been wrested from us? [. . .] But you still say you want room for your people. This has been

the plea of every robber chief from Nimrod to the present hour. (quoted in Roth 73-75)

What is perhaps most striking about Corwin's anti-war speech is that it not only completely omits the language of sectional partisanship, but it also declines to reference the specter of nonwhites "corrupting" the Republic. Enlisting the sacred symbology of the American Revolution on behalf of a racial and international Other, his argument instead expresses a profound degree of basic transcultural identification (not to mention an awareness of land as something more than exploitable resource) that is today rarely associated with mid nineteenth-century America's political discourse.

Corwin's performance provoked a firestorm in Washington and throughout the national press. Following the battle at Buena Vista, an Ohio regiment of volunteers dressed the Senator's effigy in Mexican military attire, burned it, and concluded their outraged performance by composing the epitaph: "'Old Tom Corwin is dead and here he lies;/ Nobody's sorry and nobody cries;/ Where he's gone and how he fares;/ Nobody knows and nobody cares'" (cited in Schroeder, 81). Though branded a traitor by many, Corwin's words also fully "projected him into the limelight of American politics"—to the point that he was for a time aggressively courted to make a run at the Whig nomination for President in 1848 (Graebner 162). While a number of factors contributed to the lightning-rod repercussions of Corwin's speech, perhaps the most overlooked is its resonance with counter-imperial registers of dissent that had been free-floating, however ineffectually, in the public mind. The decidedly unracial composition of Corwin's

words underscores Paul Foos' observation that, while "racism clearly pervaded American thought and freighted almost every word and action," it was also the case that "individuals made their own judgments about the meaning of race" (5). By the same token, Corwin's speech suggests that Americans during this period made their own judgments about the interrelated meanings of wars for territory in general, and westward expansion in particular.

No matter how predominant their arguments proved to be, Mexican War advocates could neither ignore nor nullify dissent from the national discourse. What those generating the dominant pro-war narrative could and did do, however, was appropriate resistance motifs in ways that attenuated their impact on the public at large. From the 1820s forward, popular writers such as Cooper and Sedgwick had skillfully manipulated white Americans' shame before the spectacle of Indian Removal, channeling it through a dazzling barrage of Big Talk designed to assure readers "that the expansionist who accepts the necessary extinction of the Indians may also be a man of deep feeling" (Maddox 32). By the time Francis Parkman made his sojourn along the Oregon Trail, the United States' war with Mexico had come to necessitate similar assurances from the war's ardent supporters. Indeed, the Mexican War exponentially raised the political and moral stakes of negotiating antebellum American counter-imperial impulses.

Manifest Destiny and Big Talk in *Oregon Trail*

Particularly as it relates to the Mexican War, *Oregon Trail*'s immersion in the conflicted national dialogue over Manifest Destiny remains only marginally touched upon by critics of Parkman's text. This omission may be traced in part to the combined influence of Mason Wade's work on Parkman's journals (1947) and Bernard DeVoto's 1943 celebration of westward expansion, *The Year of Decision 1846*. Lamenting Parkman's privileged New England background as the cause for his alleged failure to "understand the smallest part" of what was happening around him in the American West, DeVoto claimed that the "Brahmin," for all his "quiet valor," was simply "indifferent to Manifest Destiny" (115). If current criticism almost wholly rejects the romantic constructs with which Wade and DeVoto memorialized Parkman's journey, as of yet it has done little in the way of challenging their sense of *Oregon Trail*'s detachment from the major political happenings of its time.

For example, Frank Meola's 1999 essay, "A Passage Through 'Indians': Masculinity and Violence in Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*," cites DeVoto specifically in support of his assertion that, "one of the most striking things about *The Oregon Trail* is how little of it actually deals with the trail itself *or the important events of the year it covers*" (5, my emphasis). Writing for a popular audience in his Introduction to the National Geographic Society's 2002 edition of *Oregon Trail*, Anthony Brandt vigorously defends Parkman's ostensibly decontextual approach:

Parkman was present at the creation [. . .] eyewitness to a crucial moment in American history, and he has been much criticized for not writing a history of that moment rather than the adventure book that he did write. But that wasn't why he was there. He went west to live with an Indian tribe and learn something of Indian character while it was still whole. He was interested in the American wilderness and its peoples, not in recording a history he could hardly know in any case was happening around him. (xv)

Published as part of a series entitled "The Greatest Adventure Books of All Time," this most recent edition of *Oregon Trail* suggests continuing tendencies to avoid engaging the deeply troubled political history of a West more happily conceived as a wellspring of national identity connoting adventure, hardihood, and libertarian exceptionalism. But notwithstanding subsequent interpretive work by critics, editors, and general readers of *Oregon Trail*, Parkman himself is due most of the credit for the text's much-decontextualized history of reception.

Both Brandt's defense of the book and DeVoto's benign criticism of it essentially amount to reiterations of Parkman himself, whose Preface begins: "The journey which the following narrative describes was undertaken on the writer's part with a view of studying the manners and character of Indians in their primitive state [. . .] In justifying his claim to accuracy on this point, it is hardly necessary to advert to the representations given by poets and novelists, which, for the most part, are mere creations of fancy" (33).

Only a paragraph into the first chapter, Parkman expands a bit on his declared purpose, writing that he and his cousin Quincy Adams Shaw “left St. Louis on the twenty-eighth of April, on a tour of curiosity and amusement to the Rocky Mountains” (37). The opening pages, then, lay claim to two ostensibly apolitical aims—objective inquiry and thrill seeking—and through the rest of the book, exciting hunting scenes, lavish landscape renderings, and the centrally-placed account of Parkman’s sojourn with the Ogillallah tribe thoroughly dominate the trajectory of his narrative. On nearly every page that follows, moreover, Parkman reinforces the “adventure book” quality of his narrative by playing up the immediate dangers he faced on the untamed western frontier, equipped with nothing but wit, bravery, and (a point to which he returns with some frequency) his virtuosity on horseback and skill with a rifle.

But the sense of cultural detachment fostered by *Oregon Trail*’s anecdote-intensive organization barely masks the book’s active participation in rhetorics of Manifest Destiny. If Parkman’s declared object of observing “Indians in their primitive state” only implicitly invokes popular appeals to inevitability in justifying Indian Removal, on this score he is far more direct elsewhere in the book. Relating an early encounter he witnessed between a traveling Sioux village and a large party of white emigrants, for example, Parkman writes:

close at hand the wide, shallow stream was alive with boys, girls, and young squaws, splashing, screaming, and laughing in the water. At the same time a long train of emigrant wagons were crossing the creek, and

dragging on in their slow, heavy procession, passed the encampment of the people whom they and their descendants, in the space of a century, are to sweep from the face of the earth. (141).

Parkman returns to this meme of inevitable annihilation in slightly more detail later in the book, when setting up his central chapters about the Ogillallah camp. “Indians,” he asserts, “will soon be corrupted by the example of the whites, abased by whiskey and overawed by military posts; so that within a few years the traveler may pass in tolerable security through the country. Its danger and its charm will have disappeared together” (252). Such passages fully participate in what had, beginning with Cooper, for some time operated as an increasingly common literary technique for legitimizing current injustices against Native American populations by representing them as sentimental, already-historicized relics of a past age.

Similarly, one of the more subtle ways that *Oregon Trail* aligns itself with prevailing rhetorics of Manifest Destiny is through Big Talk that repeatedly acknowledges extant oppositional arguments grounded in philanthropic and pacifist principles, while at the same time playing up the naivety and fruitlessness of such arguments. He engages this particular form of counter-imperial discourse, for example, in chronicling his response to the fluctuating prospects of warfare between various Dakota tribes (including the Ogillallah with whom he stays for seventeen days) and rival Snake tribes. Having already proclaimed that he “was greatly rejoiced to hear” (168) that he might bear firsthand witness to Indian warfare, Parkman shortly thereafter is

disappointed to learn that hostilities have likely been averted. “My philanthropy at that time was no match for my curiosity,” he writes, “and I was vexed at the possibility that after all I might lose the rare opportunity of seeing the formidable ceremonies of war” (184). When the likelihood of war suddenly increases, Parkman states flatly: “*No man is a philanthropist on the prairie.* We welcomed this news most cordially, and congratulated ourselves that Bordeaux’s interested efforts to divert the Whirlwind from his congenial vocation of bloodshed had failed of success” (194, my emphasis). Sanguinely identifying his taste for violence as an incontrovertible consequence of the western experience, Parkman denies the credibility of familiar Christian pacifistic discourses represented by figures such as Beckwith and Livermore.

But perhaps *Oregon Trail*’s strongest assertion that such discourses are incongruous with human nature occurs in a lesson Parkman derives by observing fish in a spring of water. “A shoal of little fishes of about a pin’s length were playing in it, sporting together, as it seemed, very amicably,” he begins, before shifting gears in mid-sentence to tell readers:

but on closer examination, I saw that they were engaged in a cannibal warfare amongst themselves [. . .] Every moment, however, the tyrant of the pool, a monster about three inches long, with staring goggle eyes, would slowly issue forth with quivering fins and tail from under the shelving bank. The small fry at this would suspend their hostilities, and scatter in a panic at the appearance of overwhelming force.

‘Soft-hearted philanthropists,’ thought I, ‘may sigh long for their peaceful millennium; for from minnows up to men, life is an incessant battle. (341)

This derisive treatment of “[s]oft-hearted philanthropists” sighing for “their peaceful millennium” cannot be fully appreciated outside the context of the Christian pacifist and reform rhetorics that fueled controversy over a number of expansion-related issues at the time of *Oregon Trail*’s writing. Indeed, however dismissive his attitude seems to be, Parkman’s repeated reference to such rhetorics suggests an intense awareness of their potentially destabilizing impact on the triumphalist western narrative he is telling.

In terms of *Oregon Trail*’s compositional arrangement, such moments also reveal the extreme slippage between Francis Parkman’s rugged, West-soaking narrative persona and his implied position as a politically-attuned man of letters. It is the persona that lends *Oregon Trail* its apolitical quality; reading the text one is often tempted to overrate the relish with which *Oregon Trail* elevates life in the West at the direct expense of Parkman’s New England background. “I had come into the country,” he states early in the section chronicling his stay with the Ogillallah, “almost exclusively with a view of observing the Indian character [. . .] To accomplish my purpose it was necessary to live in the midst of them, and become, as it were, one of them” (169). Certainly DeVoto was persuaded that Parkman accomplished this stated goal:

joining Big Crow's lodge and taking the Red Water for his friend and advisor, Francis Parkman began his life as an Oglala Sioux. It lasted just seventeen days but it would remain a splash of color and desire, unbelievable but real, much more real than anything that occurred in the years of suffering and despair, blindness and unrelenting will, on Chestnut Street. (302)

Though approaching Parkman from a far less reverent angle, Phillip Terrie joins DeVoto in reading Parkman's privileged Eastern identity as an unsympathetic foil in the narrative, arguing: "At the center of Parkman's quest is an age-old motive: the need to prove oneself. Driving his unacknowledged desire to explore his identity is a commonplace but not openly declared suspicion, which he seeks to dispel, that he partakes of the effeteness he associates with New England society" (379).

But these interpretations of Parkman's attitude towards conventional "New England society" would be more persuasive were it not for the frequency and pride with which the author reminds readers of his Beacon Hill credentials. To begin with, while Parkman only rarely frames himself as a man of letters within the actual narrative, he consistently implies this cultural distinction with the epigraphs heading each chapter. *Oregon Trail* utilizes epigraphic space to evoke standard luminaries including Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Dryden, Goldsmith, and Scott; lines by William Cullen Bryant, meanwhile, appear multiple times, as if to reinforce the Americanness of Parkman's project. The most copious referent, however, is Byron, who gets the first

word even in Parkman's Preface, and whom Parkman reports having read during the latter stage of his journey (350-351). This use of the epigraph was a standard literary device through which many popular antebellum American authors layed claim to their place in the pantheon of English literature. For Parkman, as for a number of popular authors including Cooper, Sedgwick, Irving, and Caroline Kirkland, the epigraph was a means for maintaining urbane credentials while rendering narratives centered on the 'uncivilized' reaches of the American frontier.

Passages abound in which Parkman expresses contempt for the uncouth setting and characters populating his narrative. Citing both the published book and Parkman's journals for evidence of this proud aloofness, L. Hugh Moore has pointed out: "Again and again [Parkman] confesses that he dreaded the wrong people would become familiar with him, that he would be forced into the unwelcome company of his inferiors [. . .] He could only be truly sociable, apparently, amid the trappings of his civilization—wine, brandy, books—and with those whose culture he shared. Significantly, he carried his calling cards with him into the wilderness" (187). Parkman's urge to project this "civilized" self is epitomized in the scene where he and Shaw are on the verge of entering Fort Laramie:

By this time, as the reader may conceive, we had grown rather shabby; our clothes had burst into rags and tatters; and what was worse, we had very little means of renovation. Fort Laramie was but seven miles before us. Being totally averse to appearing in such a plight among any society

that could boast an approximation to the civilized, we soon stopped by the river to make our toilet in the best way we could. We hung up small looking-glasses against the trees and shaved, an operation neglected for six weeks; we performed our ablutions in the Platte, though the utility of such a proceeding was questionable, the water looking exactly like a cup of chocolate, and the banks consisting of the softest and richest yellow mud, so that we were obliged, as a preliminary, to build a causeway of stout branches and twigs [. . .] we took our seats on the grass with a feeling of greatly improved respectability, to await the arrival of our guests. (146)

Parkman makes an elaborate point of confessing shame at the thought of interacting with other “civilized” whites before amending what he considers to be his barbarized condition. Hardly shunning the “effeteness he associates with New England society,” both the action Parkman describes and the language with which he describes it signal an unambiguous privileging of that society. The concluding prepositional phrase, “to await the arrival of our guests,” effectively parlorizes the wild prairies Parkman has been traversing. Apprehending himself to have reached the liminal outskirts of his own whiteness, Parkman allows no room for questioning whether his bedrock values remain, as Moore correctly puts it, “amazingly unchanged” (197).

Discursive tensions between rugged adventurer and culturally-attuned narrator emerge over the course of *Oregon Trail* as one of its most persistent and compelling

motifs. The relationship between this kind of bivocality and antebellum American imperialism has recently been illuminated by Anna Brickhouse in her treatment of an 1831 letter addressed from Emerson to his brothers Edward and Charles in San Juan, Puerto Rico. “The great misfortune of travelers,” Emerson warned in that letter, “is that the expectation and the eye gradually form themselves to the new scene. In the West Indies they become West Indians in a few days—so that they cannot if they would tell the New Englander of this moment what he wants to know. You should keep one eye a patriot and the other an emigrant at the same time as the seaman keeps home-time with one watch and apparent with the other” (quoted in Brickhouse, 21). Observes Brickhouse of Emerson’s fraternal admonition:

if Emerson’s disembodied, universalist, all-seeing “transparent eye-ball” is an enduring image within a dominant nationalist narrative of U.S. literary history, then we might take the strange, doubled figuration of the “patriot” eye keeping watch over its “emigrant” twin as a symptomatic trope that tells us much about what this dominant history has repressed—and about the insistent pressure of an alternative literary past to which many of Emerson’s contemporaries were contributing. (22-23)

Brickhouse rightly emphasizes the letter’s importance as possibly “the sole image of *binocular*ity in all of Emerson’s writings” (22), but her analysis of it also reflects poignantly on the *bivocal* methodology with which travel writers like Parkman

represented the American West at a time when the United States government—whether by treaty with Native American tribes and the British government, or by war with Mexico—was systematically scrubbing the region clean of its “foreignness.”

No matter how eagerly Parkman’s literary persona appears to distance himself from the economic and political concerns of the urbane East, *Oregon Trail*’s guiding narrative voice retains an overarching adherence to “dominant nationalist narrative[s].” Indeed, it is largely by virtue of its alternating vocalities that *Oregon Trail* deftly alleviates the central problem identified in Emerson’s letter: while enthusiastically telling of his experiences *in* the West, Parkman never quite brings himself across as *of* the West. Freshly graduated from Harvard Law School, widely read in the major English literary figures as well as the most influential frontier romancers of his own era, and at the age of twenty-three already an experienced contributor to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, Parkman approached both the actual and literary West fully equipped with, to paraphrase Brickhouse, a patriot’s voice.

Parkman’s bivocal arrangement puts him in a position to romanticize the unfamiliar West even as he underwrites its conquest by harbingers of the civilized East. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this discursive double-dealing involves his portrayal of Henry Chatillon, the white backwoodsman-hunter who accompanies Parkman for the lion’s share of the journey. Introducing Chatillon, Parkman writes: “The prairies had been his school; he could neither read nor write, but he had a natural refinement and delicacy of mind [. . .] He was a proof of what unaided nature will sometimes do. I have never, in the city or in the wilderness, met a better man than my

noble and true-hearted friend, Henry Chatillon” (49-50). All this suggests high appreciation for Chatillon, and over the course of *Oregon Trail* Parkman continues to romanticize him in this way; to be sure, Chatillon’s importance to the narrative is surpassed only by that of Parkman himself. It is Chatillon—whose skill with a rifle, readers are told at one point, “could fairly out-rival Leatherstocking himself” (225)—whom Parkman credits for teaching him the proper method for hunting buffalo. Further, by including him in the ceremonies attending the death of his Sioux wife, Chatillon provides Parkman with his necessary “in” with the Ogillallah tribe. But just as Cooper had done with his Leatherstocking, all along Parkman makes it clear that Chatillon represents a lower order of whiteness, one that is ultimately as doomed as the Indian tribes he fraternizes with. Even in the passage where Chatillon is reverently introduced, Parkman marginalizes him through appeals to racial and cultural exceptionalism: “He was born in a little French town near St. Louis [. . .] Henry has not that restless energy of an Anglo-American. He was content to take things as he found them; and his chief fault arose from an excess of easy generosity, impelling him to give away too profusely ever to thrive in the world” (49).

Especially in light of Chatillon’s marriage to an Indian woman, this denigration of his character and prospects inscribes the trifecta association of Francophobia, anti-Catholic sentiment, and “Indian hating” that popular fiction writers ranging from Cooper and Sedgwick to Robert Montgomery Bird had imbued into the national imagination for decades. Certainly these associations were far more conventional than Fuller’s treatment in *Summer on the Lakes*, which as we have seen, reinforces its lengthy advocacies for

Native American peoples with related apologia on behalf of French Catholics. In diametric opposition to Fuller's celebratory apprehension of the West's cultural, racial, and spiritual hybridity, Parkman privileges the prevailing hegemonizing view of westward expansion—an ideological precursor to the “Turner Thesis,” this view allowed only marginally more room for Chatillon than for the Sioux tribe into which he is married. The importance of this inevitable truth to the narrative logic of *Oregon Trail* is reflected in the final sentences of the narrative, which bid Chatillon goodbye:

My rifle, which he had always been fond of using, as it was an excellent piece, much better than his own, is now in his hands, and perhaps at this moment its sharp voice is startling the echoes of the Rocky Mountains. On the next morning we left town, and after a fortnight of railroads and steamboats we saw once more the familiar features of home. (463)

In this conclusion to *Oregon Trail* and even more so in the elegiac footnote Parkman appends on the last page, Henry Chatillon and the (temporarily) “untamed” West are lionized—but only in a way that cements the author's own preferred identification with the “home” that, fittingly, gets the final word in his narrative. To the extent that Parkman nostalgically identifies his rugged alter-ego with the “sharp voice” of the rifle he has given away, he does so with a complicit awareness that the technological forces rendering the rifle “better than [Henry's] own” have also given rise to the weaponry and modern modes of transportation bringing about Henry's obsolescence.

With his manner of representing Native Americans, himself, and the noble-hearted Henry Chatillon, Parkman in *Oregon Trail* both acknowledges and to a degree encourages a nineteenth-century American willingness to conceive the West and its peoples according to their own unique terms. But Parkman also thoroughly relegates this interpretive approach to the level of mere Big Talk, continually overriding these makers of the antebellum counter-imperial impulse within a mainline narrative saturated with conquest ideology. The literary abuses committed against Native Americans by Parkman in *Oregon Trail* (as well as in his later histories) have by this point been especially well-documented, if not universally agreed-upon. In his otherwise appreciative Introduction to *Oregon Trail* (1983), David Levin acknowledged that the text provides:

an ill-comprehended experience of Indian hospitality, the nomadic life, and Indian religion. In these pages Indian thought, like Indian conversation, seems empty, to be judged by the standard of technological and Unitarian progress [. . .] In this regrettable limitation, as in his strength, Parkman represents American literary culture in his time. (20-21).

But *Oregon Trail*'s reflection of the Anglo-American triumphalism that Levin associates with contemporary "literary culture" was not limited to its caricature of Native Americans. Parkman also reflects popular 1840s sites of anxiety over the region's

copious racial and cultural hybridity. If his engagement with these anxieties is most immediately signified by his treatments of Chatillon and Delorier (the party's French-Canadian cook, whose banality Parkman draws out to the point of hyperbole), it also informs his expressed loathing for Mormons as well as his numerous condescending references to the complex and often-tragic situation of the westward-moving emigrant trains—one of which he depicts as “full of men of various races and complexions, all more or less drunk” (181). And throughout *Oregon Trail*, Parkman invokes hotbutton controversies and negative associations surrounding the United States' war with Mexico.

Throughout *Oregon Trail*, Parkman's references to the Mexican War communicate unqualified support for it, and nowhere does he sugarcoat his disgust for Mexico, its institutions, and its people. In the book's opening moments aboard the Missouri steamer, he writes: “On the muddy shore stood some thirty or forty dark slavish-looking Spaniards, gazing stupidly out from beneath their broad hats” (39). Describing the buffalo hunt along the Platte River, Parkman reserves space for remembering a cluster of boats manned by “swarthy, ignoble Mexicans, [who] turned their brutish faces upward to look, as I reached the bank” (117). At a trading-house outside Fort Laramie, he encounters a group of “squalid Mexicans, armed with bows and arrows” (181). And, stopping at Bent's Fort on his return journey, Parkman writes, “[t]wo or three squalid Mexicans, with their broad hats, and their vile faces overgrown with hair, were lounging about the bank of the river in front of it.” As though recording an encounter with rodents, he reports that these Mexicans “disappeared as they saw us approach” (375), only to find himself afflicted in the next paragraph by the sight of

“squaws, and Spanish women, and a few Mexicans, as mean and miserable as the place itself, [who] were lazily sauntering about” (376).

The anti-Mexican rhetoric in *Oregon Trail*, moreover, goes well beyond proliferating popular stereotypes of indolence and squalor. At the Ogillallah village he and his white Canadian attendant make fireside jokes combining anti-Catholic slurs with what the standard literary practice of basely sexualizing Mexican women (Streeby 64-65):

‘Your Spanish woman?’ said I; ‘I never heard of her before. Are you married to her?’

‘No,’ answered Raymond, again looking intelligent; ‘the priests don’t marry their women, and why should I marry mine?’

This honorable mention of the Mexican clergy introduced the subject of religion [. . .] (268)

Given such passages it comes as no surprise when, in the late scene at Bent’s Fort, Colorado, Parkman matter-of-factly asserts: “The human race in this part of the world is separated into three divisions, arranged in the order of their merits: white men, Indians, and Mexicans; *to the latter of which the honorable title of ‘whites’ is by no means conceded*” (378-379, my emphasis). The bright line he draws between whites and Mexicans regurgitates pro-war rhetorics grounded in appeals to racial superiority, thus refuting prominent war critics such as Berrien, Corwin, and Clay (as well as reluctant

supporters such as O'Sullivan), who recognized potential sites of ideological identification with their republican neighbors to the south.

DeVoto's charges of Brahmin aloofness notwithstanding, the romantic attitude with which Robert Johanssen documents so many Americans embracing the Mexican War very much informs Parkman's prose. Towards the end of the book, describing an encounter with Price's Missouri regiment of volunteers, he enthuses: "No men ever embarked upon a military expedition with greater love for the work before them [. . .] when their exploits have rung through all America, it would be absurd to deny that they were excellent irregular troops" (434). This celebration of American volunteer courage leads Parkman briefly to digress into the battle of Sacramento, where he recounts the already-famous story of Doniphan's volunteers taking inspiration from the sudden appearance of a lone eagle, and though badly outnumbered, "rushing like tigers upon the enemy," leaving "four hundred Mexicans slain upon the spot, and the rest fled, scattering over the plain like sheep" (433-434). These and multiple other nods to the war effort would not have been lost on Parkman's contemporary audience, and seriously undermine claims that Parkman's book was at all "indifferent" to the major political and geographical happenings of America 1846.

Indeed, Parkman in a variety of ways plays up the nobility of the war effort and of the Americans soldiers fighting it. Writing of his stay at Fort Laramie, Parkman praises emigrants there "of the same stock with the volunteers of Monterey and Buena Vista" (158). At the end of the same chapter he tells readers that Shaw, a year after their journey along the Oregon Trail, read in the penny papers of "Another great battle in

Mexico!”—news he quite naturally received as “glorious intelligence” (164). Relating his initial discovery that hostilities had officially broken out on the Mexican-American border, Parkman notes his gratification at learning that a party of Americans had successfully ambushed a Mexican buffalo-hunting expedition: “When the Mexicans had shot away all their arrows, the Americans had fired their guns, raised their war whoop, rushed out, and killed them all. We could only infer from this, that war had been declared with Mexico, and a battle fought in which the Americans were victorious. When some weeks after, we arrived at the Pueblo, we heard of General Kearney’s march up the Arkansas, and of General Taylor’s victories at Matamoras” (361). A chapter later at Bent’s Fort, Parkman tells readers of a French trader whose business expedition to Taos has been held up by the progression of the war, and who “was quietly waiting till the conquest of the country should allow him to proceed” (376).

But while *Oregon Trail* conveys enthusiasm for the war effort, its treatment is not unambiguously propagandistic. Just as Parkman occasionally gives lip service to lamenting Native Americans’ rapidly-approaching “disappearance,” in several places he evokes controversies and negative associations surrounding the American invasion. In the narrative’s overall scheme, these moments amount to nothing more than Big Talk; like many popular travel writings of its era, the text evokes sites of meaningful resistance to expansionist doctrine, but rather than developing them to the point of sustained argumentation, instead subsumes them within a broader adherence to Anglo-American triumphalism. Nevertheless, like *Oregon Trail*’s seemingly compulsive reverberation with contemporary fringe pacifist movements, the text’s ventriloquization of more

popular antiwar registers suggests its apprehension of an ineradicable need to negotiate with culturally-pervasive ambivalences towards the Mexican War.

Runaways: Slavery and Soldiering in *Oregon Trail*

Arguably *Oregon Trail*'s most poignant, if somewhat indirect, ventilation of counter-imperial sensibility involves the runaway slave's bizarre sudden appearance in the "moving village" of Ogillallah Indians that Parkman and Shaw have recently joined outside Fort Laramie, Wyoming. Comprising only three pages and never referenced afterwards, Parkman's encounter with the runaway brings his ostensibly apolitical "tour of curiosity and amusement" to a sudden and dramatic halt, replacing it instead with what was arguably the most frequented rallying point for anti-war activism. Evoking the lone spectral figure of a runaway slave from Missouri, *Oregon Trail* offers a discomfiting reminder to readers that so long as the slavery issue exists in the United States, it cannot but factor decisively in westward expansion, both as a presence in the region and a political burden on the entire nation.

Before addressing Parkman's lone engagement with the slavery issue in *Oregon Trail*, however, it bears emphasizing first that on a practical political level, probably the most significant impact on Mexican War discourses by fringe-status anti-slavery agitators was that their heated rhetoric fueled suspicions among much larger segments of the population—represented by Free Soil Democrats and conservative Northern Whigs—that the invasion of Mexico in truth amounted to a thinly-veiled play for extending slavery into Texas and ultimately across the West. These suspicions obtained

far more currency, however, in August 1846 when David Wilmot, an obscure, first-term Pennsylvania Democrat, offered a proviso to the war budget mandating free-state status for any and all territories gained at the conclusion of the war. Ironically, Wilmot, a loyal supporter of Polk and the war, had conceived his proposal as a means of de-escalating criticism of both and trusted that the president was “sincerely ready to negotiate an honorable peace.” While his proviso did not become law, later that fall the *Boston Whig* correctly observed that Wilmot had “brought to a head the great question which is about to divide the American people.” In his private diary Polk labeled the Wilmot Proviso “mischievous & foolish,” adding “[w]hat connection slavery had with making peace with Mexico it is difficult to conceive” (quote in Morrison 41, 42).

But with the Compromise of 1850 that formally closed out the war’s practical aftermath, Congress organized its new surplus of western lands and aggressively updated its Fugitive Slave Law; this same legislation relegated the slavery question to “popular sovereignty” in all gained territories excepting California—a move that severely undercut the Missouri Compromise and set the stage for the passage of the highly inflammatory Kansas/Nebraska Act four years later. Slavery proved the pivotal and by far the most contentious issue in the United States government’s effort to move past a war that, according to Polk and his most outspoken supporters anyway, had no connection to the institution whatever. Indeed, the President’s apparent incredulity notwithstanding, by the time Parkman published *Oregon Trail*, congressional squabbling over how to designate the acquired Mexican territories had already verified, for many across the country, slavery’s centrality to the war.

At the same time, many moderate and conservative Americans balked at anti-slavery rhetoric, seeing in it the potential destruction of the Union. Even Corwin, who all along backed a “no territory” approach to the Mexican War, “publicly denounced” Wilmot on these grounds—as though it were a direct extension of the abolitionist agenda, Corwin referred to the Wilmot Proviso as a ‘dangerous question’” (Morrison 80). Parkman himself was wholly representative of this outlook, and his hostility to the abolitionist movement was palpable. Staunchly a Unionist first, he remarked in an 1850 letter to *Oregon Trail* editor Charles Eliot Norton: “A great Union party is forming in opposition to the abolitionists and southern fanatics. For my part I would see every slave knocked on the head before I would see the Union go to pieces and would include in the sacrifice as many abolitionists as could be conveniently brought together” (*Letters* 79). Some four years earlier, in an entry to the journal he kept while travelling on the Oregon Trail, Parkman had written:

Stuck on a sandbar in the river. There is a gang of slaves below. Two of them are chained together. Another fellow, with an immense mouth, is beating the banjo, and a dance is going on with the utmost merriment. None are more gay and active than the two fellows chained together. They seem never to have known a care. Nothing is on their faces but careless, thoughtless enjoyment. Is it not safe to conclude them to be an inferior race? (*Journals* 483)

Beyond his expressed disdain for the abolitionists and his adherence to prevailing rhetorics of white racial supremacy, throughout the Mexican War Parkman reflected an attitude shared by many conservative Northern Whigs who were willing to perpetuate popular apologetics for slavery as a benign institution.

Yet, Parkman's description of the unnamed slave in *Oregon Trail* could easily have been plagiarized from the minutes of one of Garrison's conventions or from any number of Northern Whig journalistic organs. Quite literally, the runaway interrupts Parkman's text. Midway through a paragraph inventorying aspects of Ogillallah life, Parkman switches gears to tell readers of an afternoon when a small party of the Indians on horseback "came suddenly into sight [. . .] leading with them a mule, on whose back was a wretched negro." The description that follows is harrowing:

His cheeks were withered and shrunken in the hollow of his jaws; his eyes were unnaturally dilated, and his lips seemed shrivelled and drawn back from his teeth like those of a corpse. When they brought him up before our tent, and lifted him from the saddle, he could not walk or stand, but he crawled a short distance, and with a look of utter misery sat down on the grass [. . .] The wretch was starving to death! For thirty-three days he had wandered alone on the prairie, without weapon of any kind; without shoes, moccasins, or any other jacket than an old jacket and pantaloons [. . .] he had walked on in despair, till he could walk no

longer, and then crawled on his knees, until the bone was layed bare. He chose the night for his traveling [. . .] (208)

The undead quality of Parkman's language here perverts the idea of the American West as a site of rejuvenation. Half-starved, reduced in his movements first to a shamle and finally to a crawl, moving only by night, the runaway takes on all the character of a zombie—or, in Parkman's words, a "living corpse."

The ironic juxtaposition between the mid-century propagandistic West that *Oregon Trail* propagates and the enervating impact of the slave's appearance in the text is rendered especially notable in light of Parkman's own acknowledged mental and physical deteriorations over the course of his journey. As Doughty has observed:

At Laramie [. . .] dysentery from the alkali water attacked him full force, to recur, with delusive intermissions, through the rest of the trip. From Laramie on, a quality of phantasmagoria displaces the holiday mood of the narrative, as he tried to stop the ravages of the violent diarrhea that racked him by a starvation diet of a biscuit a day, or, hardly able to walk without reeling, forced himself into the saddle at Bull's Bear village, convinced of the probability that he would "never leave those deserts." (127-128)

Harold Beaver's 1975 essay, "Parkman's Crack-Up: A Bostonian on the Oregon Trail" went even further in emphasizing the centrality of Parkman's debilitating ailments to his experience of the West, writing that his "more obvious recurring symptoms were partial blindness, severe heart pangs, and constant headaches as if he were going out of his mind: insomnia, depression, crippling rheumatism, arthritis" (89).

Just as Parkman's published manuscript downplays the extent of his own ailments, the surrounding text's total oblivion to the slavery issue severely attenuates the runaway's impact on the text. Moreover, before abandoning him, Parkman even undercuts the slave's readability as a critique of slavery, concluding the scene in a manner that echoes the author's journal ruminations on slavery as a happy condition for the "inferior race." As the runaway had crossed the plains in search of sustenance, Parkman tells readers, he was "always dreaming, as he said, of the broth and corn-cake he used to eat under his old master's shed in Missouri" (208). That Parkman would not only follow his horror-struck description of a runaway slave by suggesting he had been better off "under his old Master's shed," but also with a subsequent elision of the slavery issue altogether, is unsurprising from the vantage point of his own conservative politics.

Such rhetorical moves by Parkman make sense from a book-marketing perspective as well, as for any mid-century travel writer of the West (along with his or her fiction-writing contemporaries) a sustained treatment of the slavery issue would hardly contribute to the sense of romantic adventure that they were in the business of reinforcing. Along the same lines and perhaps most important of all, even the slightest suggestion of an author's definitive stand on the slavery question was tantamount to

alienating a huge swath of his or her potential readership. *Oregon Trail* thus prudently abandons the slave as abruptly as it had introduced him. Yet just before leaving the scene behind, Parkman tells readers that when he and Shaw rode out of camp the recuperated slave, though “slightly deranged,” was “otherwise in tolerable health, and expressed his firm conviction that nothing could ever kill him” (210). Taking nourishment and even a sense of immortality in the expanding territories of the West, the anonymous slave stands as an ominous figuration for the entire “peculiar institution.”

However brief, his disruption of a romantic scene in *Oregon Trail* recalls antiwar critics’ familiar charge that, despite westward expansion’s attendant rhetorics of destiny, promise, and the spread of republican liberty, the enterprise had devolved into a stalking horse for extending the Southern slave power. Although Parkman begins the next paragraph of his narrative conveying a sense that he and his experience of the West have been fundamentally unaffected—“When the sun was yet an hour high,” begins the next paragraph, “it was a gay scene in the village” (210)—the slave’s sudden intrusion into Parkman’s narrative nevertheless reverberates with widespread anxieties over the United States’ territorial seizure from a country that had officially outlawed the practice some twenty years before. Ultimately, the significance of the slave’s appearance in *Oregon Trail* has less to do with anything that the text actually describes, than with what Parkman leaves out of it. Contemporary readers of *Oregon Trail*, whether in the *Knickerbocker* installments of 1847 or in its book form two years later, would undoubtedly have recognized in Parkman’s perfunctory reference to slavery a primary

site of popular, hotbutton contestation over an expansionist program for which the Mexican War was the crowning emblem.

Oregon Trail's representations of the military more specifically address anxieties and ideological divisions spawned by that war. As did nearly all writers who represented the war, Parkman attends to distinctions between the regulars and the volunteer militias. From the beginning, the Mexican War's connotations in the public discourse were troubled by the volunteers' fierce rivalry with the regulars, a rivalry that played out in the press as well as on the battlefields, and which Johannsen attributes to "[t]he popular distrust of the professional soldier and the resentment of the regulars against attacks on the military" (40). In the eyes of many Americans, the volunteers were far preferable to the regulars; if the colonial ramifications of a standing army somewhat tarnished its reputation from the outset, the volunteers elected their own officers, negotiated their own wages, and (ostensibly) participated in the war solely out of ideological conviction. "It was the image of the citizen soldier," writes Johannsen, "the individual who turned from peaceful civilian pursuits to the defense of his country, that captivated the popular mind and confirmed the nation's republican mission" (40). But to others, including regular officers like George McClellan, the volunteers were a foolish mob who "didn't know the butt of a musket from its muzzle" (Johannsen 41), and their romantic zeal for fighting Mexicans would melt at the first sign of actual danger.

While politic enough to bestow praise upon Doniphan's and a few other volunteer regiments, Parkman (perhaps predictably considering Parkman's identification

with New England Whiggery) displays a clear partiality for the rigidly hierarchal regulars, whose great representative in the text is Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny. Early in *Oregon Trail*, recalling his entry into Fort Leavenworth, Parkman writes: “Colonel, now General Kearney, to whom I had the honor of an introduction when at St. Louis, was just arrived, and received us at his quarters with the high-bred courtesy habitual to him” (58). Kearny was one of the more celebrated figures to emerge from the war—as Parkman here alludes, his early conquest of New Mexico, followed later by his march to California, earned him the rank of General well before hostilities’ end. But while Parkman approvingly cites Kearny throughout *Oregon Trail*, there is one early moment in the text that implicates the Colonel in one of the war’s broadest pejorative connotations in the public mind: military desertion.

Only a few days removed from amicable commiseration with Kearny at Fort Leavenworth, Parkman and his traveling companions find themselves off the Trail and lost, when “a confused crowd of horsemen” appears. “[A]mong the dingy habiliments of our party,” writes Parkman, “glittered the uniforms of four dragoons” (73-74). This synecdochic emphasis on the soldiers’ shiny apparel would have been readily appreciated by a contemporary readership familiar on the one hand with depictions of Mexican War soldiers “as embodying both chivalric and frontier ideals” (Johannsen 111) and on the other hand with arguments that the pomp of soldiering was “calculated to start the germs of a dozen future wars in the breasts of a rising generation, and to make our American youth think that nothing is so glorious as war” (Livermore 18). But that these particular dragoons turn out to be deserters suggests, to say the least, a very

different kind of soldier from either of these models, vying for his share of the public imagination. *Oregon Trail*'s military deserters distinguish themselves not as markers of Anglo-American triumphalism, but almost as a satiric parody to the opposite effect.

In the brief space allotted to them, the dragoon deserters in *Oregon Trail* come across in an entirely sympathetic light. Were it not for them, readers are given to understand, Parkman's party, limited in manpower and supplies, might easily have wandered dangerously wide of the Trail. Significantly, the dragoons' knowledge of the correct route and their deserter-status are revealed in the same sentence: "This we learned from the dragoons, who had lately deserted from Fort Leavenworth." In the next and final paragraph of the chapter, Parkman writes, "In extremely bad temper, we encamped on this ill-starred spot; while the deserters, whose case admitted of no delay, rode rapidly forward" (74). Parkman declines to offer the slightest substantive commentary on desertion itself—a move that at first glance seems a bit odd, considering his patrician sense of propriety, his general support for the war effort, and the prominence he awards Kearny throughout the book. But *Oregon Trail*'s evaluative silence on the issue can likely be attributed to desertion's commonplace status during the war.

As Foos has pointed out, in the decades leading up to Civil War, "up to one-third of the [military] men had in fact deserted," so that the Mexican War "had the highest rate of desertion of any American War" (25). Among the most well-known causes were notoriously harsh disciplinary tactics such as flogging, which the Congress finally banned under public pressure in 1850 (the same year Melville railed against in it with the

publication of *White Jacket*). Further, the unsanitary conditions endured by soldiers on the actual front were no secret, and according to Johannsen more than six thousand volunteers “died from disease and exposure, about ten times the number killed in action [. . .] Although figures vary widely, a higher percentage of regulars were depleted by disease as well” (42). Later in *Oregon Trail*, with his own dysentery beginning to assume a more significant role in the narrative, Parkman directly cites this inglorious affliction’s responsibility for “such heavy losses to the army on the Rio Grande” (170). In addition to these institutionally-based causes for desertion, Foos also points out that large numbers of regulars also illustrated Manifest Destiny’s centrifugal element by breaking ranks to seek their personal fortunes.

For the particular deserters in *Oregon Trail*, Parkman specifies no motive. Nor does he need to; regardless of causation, it is impossible to conceive an act more comprehensive of outright dissent than wartime military desertion. Again, one is reminded of Thoreau’s conjectural assertion that “in the outset, the people would not have consented to” war with Mexico—that a “comparatively few” individuals and economic interests, purporting to speak for the nation as a whole, had managed to rhetorically spin the war effort in such a way as to make it appear an outgrowth of the broader public will. Indeed, the Mexican War’s high desertion rate serves as a dramatic indicator that individual Americans’ resistance to the war effort remained a significant obstacle to be overcome. As Foos observes, in New Hampshire, where antiwar sentiment ran particularly high, private citizens were well known to have “often harbored deserters and even forcibly resisted the military authorities in their attempts to

capture absconding recruits”; and it was even the case that a “small but significant minority” of Mexican War deserters wound up fighting “against their nominal countrymen” (23, 6). General Taylor certainly understood both the physical and symbolic importance of desertion, for it was his stated policy to have men shot on sight while in the process of attempting to re-cross the Rio Grande (Foos 26).

Given this highly-charged atmosphere, readers of *Oregon Trail* would have wondered little at Parkman’s end-of-chapter remark, “we encamped on this ill-starred spot; while the deserters, whose case admitted of no delay, rode rapidly forward” (386). And it is significant that the explicitly pro-war Parkman, in his brief depiction of deserters from Kearny’s ranks, publishes an account of himself interacting with them in an entirely friendly and open manner, gladly accepting their guidance and offering them a meal. Viewed in context, the moment is a literary space that deconstructs the spread-eagle war propaganda figured by the soldiers’ glittering uniforms. But to be sure, as with his handling of the runaway, Parkman prevents this moment from developing into a sustained critique. When the deserters, under the threat of the severest consequences, ride away never to be mentioned again, they carry away with them an important reminder that members of the United States military, no less than civilians, are of myriad, deeply conflicted minds about the war.

“Fool Enough to Go Atrottin”: Tête Rouge and Volunteerism in *Oregon Trail*

Excepting the deserters, Parkman’s treatment of regulars mostly parrots conventional registers of approbation for the war, but his engagement with the

volunteers reflects far more critically on it. As a kind of inverse counterpart to Kearny, *Oregon Trail*'s stand-in volunteer is a personage designated "Tête Rouge," whose companionship Parkman and Shaw grudgingly allow while making their way from Bent's Fort back to the Kansas settlements. At the beginning of a chapter entitled "Tête Rouge, the Volunteer," Parkman introduces him as "an extraordinary little figure approach[ing] us in a military dress," and tells readers that while he and his party "liked our petitioner's appearance so little" they initially rejected Tête Rouge's request to join them, until "he begged us so hard to take pity on him, looked so disconsolate and told so lamentable a story, that at last we consented" (384-385). Parkman has almost nothing positive to say about Tête Rouge, emphasizing instead the latter's incessant talk, his bottomless appetite and lack of common sense. Tête Rouge's inability to control his mule at times painfully slows the party's movement, and he infuriates the party with his "inveterate habit of pilfering provisions at all times of the day" (425). Hoping to acquire whiskey, he almost gets himself killed bursting in unannounced on an evening encampment of armed regulars en route with supplies for Kearny at Santa Fe (454-455). And in one of the more amusing exchanges in *Oregon Trail*, Tête Rouge awakens Parkman in the middle of the night to report hostile Indians have infiltrated the camp and stolen their horses; Parkman investigates the matter himself and, after predictably discovering nothing, directs Tête Rouge "to go to bed and not alarm the camp again if he saw the whole Arapahoe village coming" (402).

Parkman intertwines his own sense of Tête Rouge's ridiculousness with his identification as a volunteer from the moment of his introduction, telling readers: "In the

spring, thinking that a summer's campaign would be an agreeable recreation, he had joined a company of St. Louis volunteers." Providing Tête Rouge's back-story partially through his own words, Parkman makes no effort to disguise his contempt for "the Volunteer":

"There were three of us," said Tête Rouge, "me and Bill Stephens and John Hopkins. We thought we would just go out with the army, and when we had conquered the country, we would get discharged, and take our pay, you know, and go down to Mexico. They say there is plenty of fun going on there. Then we could go back to New-Orleans by way of Vera Cruz."

But Tête Rouge, like many a stouter volunteer, had reckoned without his host. Fighting Mexicans was a less amusing occupation than he had supposed, and his pleasure trip was disagreeably interrupted by brain fever, which attacked him when about half way to Bent's Fort.
(385).

Parkman disregards the notion of volunteer heroism here, opting instead for the equally familiar caricatures of volunteers as opportunistic and feckless. By trading in this latter representative mode, *Oregon Trail* channels one of the most biting criticisms of the war—that it had been brought about not by necessity, but rather through the realization

of grasping agendas for which the volunteers' baseless romanticism was an apt figuration.

In repeatedly pointing up Tête Rouge's incompetence and cowardice, *Oregon Trail* trades in two of the best-known negative stereotypes of the Mexican War volunteers. Aggravating these qualities is an equally familiar third: warrantless braggadocio. Describing their entry into Arapahoe territory, Parkman relates Tête Rouge putting on "his little military jacket" and assuming "a most martial posture in the saddle, set his cap over his left eye with an air of defiance, and earnestly entreated that somebody would lend him a gun or a pistol for only half an hour [. . .] he knew from experience what effect the presence of a military man in his uniform always had upon the mind of an Indian, and he thought the Arapahoes ought to know there was a soldier in the party" (395-396). Conducting himself in this self-aggrandizing manner, "Tête Rouge, the Volunteer" comes across in *Oregon Trail* as something of an affront to both the spirit and substance of the country—a point the author crystallizes when the party sights an eagle and Tête Rouge attempts to shoot it. As if to assure readers that even at their worst such volunteers are incapable of doing any substantive damage to the republic, Parkman immediately disclaims, "[a]s might have been expected," the eagle (as well as the buzzards) came through entirely unscathed. Still, appearing only a few pages before the account of Doniphan's eagle-inspired victory at Sacramento, Tête Rouge's "unpatriotic" effort "to kill the bird of America" (428) subtly ironizes one of the volunteers' most positive and romantic associations of the entire war. And when this character finally parts ways with Parkman outside Fort Leavenworth, readers are told he

“was anxious to go to the Fort in order to receive payment for his valuable military services” (458).

The idea of volunteers as naïve, exploitable tools of an imperialist war machine informed much of the antiwar literature, and constituted a primary theme in James Russell Lowell’s *Biglow Papers*, which Schroeder identifies as “the most popular attack on the war” (37). A Massachusetts Whig and outspoken abolitionist, Lowell published the *Biglow Papers* in eight monthly installments of the *Boston Courier* beginning in June 1846, and published them together as a book in 1848. The book’s dominant counter-imperial voice belongs to the title character, a curmudgeonly Yankee farmer named Hosea Biglow, who asks in the opening installment: “Wut’s the use o’ meetin’ goin’/ Every Sabbath, wet or dry,/Ef it’s right to go amowin’/Feller men like oats an’ rye?” (51). But in terms of volunteerism specifically, the most scathing indictment appears by way of the ironically named Birdofredom Sawin, whom Hosea describes as “fool enough to go attrotin inter Miss Chiff arter a Drum and a fife [. . .] I rather cal’late he’s middlin tired o’ voluntearin By this Time” (58). In a letter home that Hosea is seeking to have published in the local paper, Sawin reveals that he is indeed tired of volunteering. The terms of the letter anticipate critics like Corwin, who would identify the Mexican people as fellow human beings worthy of Americans’ respect:

Afore I come away from hum I hed a strong persuasion
That Mexicans worn’t human beans—an ourang outang nation,
A sort o’ folks a chap could kill an’ never dream on’t arter

No more'n a feller'd dream o'pigs that he had hed to slarter;
 I'd an idee thet they were built arter the darkie fashion all,
 An' kickin' colored folks about, you know, 's a kind o' national;
 But wen I jined I worn't so wise ez that air queen o'Sheby,
 Fer, come to look at 'em, they aint much different from wut we be (62).

Foos has noted that Lowell's Birdofredom Sawin "represented a middle-class view of a lower-class man responding to Democratic propaganda [. . .] the 'wise fool' of rural New England used native common sense to deflate the war propaganda" (65). However, it is integral to Lowell's broader critique of the war that unlike Hosea, Sawin undergoes a dramatic ideological change over the course of *The Biglow Papers*. He confesses to having been initially inspired by "a little drummin"—inspired, that is, by soaring rhetorics of Manifest Destiny, to the point that he thought the "millanyum wuz acomin/ [. . .] An' every feller felt ez though Mexico wuz hisn'" (61). Before actually participating in the war, Sawin's attitude towards it is practically identical to that evinced by Tête Rouge in *Oregon Trail*: both are moved by a sense of nonchalance towards the nation and people they set out to conquer, and they share a desire to participate in that conquest. After entering the conflict, Tête Rouge hardly experiences Sawin's epiphany that Mexican people "aint much different from wut we be," but his romantic expectations are no less dashed, nor is he less eager to withdraw himself from the war on finding that conquering a nation means "reckoning" with one's "host."

It is clearly not Parkman's intent to attack the United States' war effort or even volunteerism in *Oregon Trail*. Yet it is interesting that his only developed representation of a volunteer trades fully in the negative associations that critics of the war, and Parkman could not but have known, vociferously injected into the public discourse. One of the more famed domestic confrontations during the war pitted volunteers against the Reverend Theodore Parker, whose friendship and influence extended to many of the era's important literary New Englanders, including Francis Parkman (Doughty 77). Appearing at an anti-war rally in Boston on February 4th, 1847, Parker was continually interrupted by volunteer militiamen, who threatened him to the point of death. Instead of backing down, Parker argued that his antagonists would be better off deserting than remaining faithful to the social and economic elite in whose interests they were fighting:

I think there is a good deal to excuse the volunteers. I blame them, for some of them know what they are about. Yet I pity them more, for most of them, I am told, are low, ignorant men; some of them drunken and brutal. From the uproar they make here to-night, arms in their hands, I think what was told me is true! I say, I pity them . . . I blame the captains and colonels, who will have the least of the hardships, most of the pay, and all of the "glory. . . ."

I say, I blame not so much the volunteers as the famous men who deceive the nation! (Cries of "Throw him over; kill him; kill him!" and a flourish of bayonets.) Throw him over! you will not throw him over.

Kill him! I shall walk home unarmed and unattended, and not a man of you will hurt one hair of my head. (quoted in Foos 67)

Parker was representative of a minority but nevertheless highly outspoken contingent of antebellum Americans who unflinchingly attacked the volunteers' inflated sense of agency, both intellectually and physically. Whatever Parkman's intended purposes, by dramatizing these attacks, the most ludicrous personage in *Oregon Trail* stands out as its *nearest* point of divergence from the conquest ideologies that the book is in the business of promoting.

Parkman's engagement with "Tête Rouge, the volunteer" is far more fully developed than his treatments of the slavery question, military desertion, or any other negative association that appears in his text, with respect to Manifest Destiny in general and the Mexican War in particular. However, in the penultimate paragraph of *Oregon Trail*, Parkman invokes the rivalry between regulars and volunteers in a way that reinscribes his support for the war. Leaving readers with a final image of Tête Rouge "on the floor, maudlin drunk, and crying dismally," Parkman notes that "a circle of dragoons stood contemplating him as he lay" (462). Parkman does not specify whether or not the dragoons have physically assaulted Tête Rouge, or whether they have simply come upon him in his pathetic state. In any case the dragoons' sober act of "contemplation" in this moment restores an element of dignity to the Mexican War, and the soldiers fighting it, before Parkman literally brings his narrative "to the familiar features of home."

CHAPTER IV

MELVILLE AND AMERICA'S AMBIVALENT RESPONSE TO THE WEST

A review of *The California and Oregon Trail* by Herman Melville appeared in the New York *Literary World* on March 31, 1849. Entitled "Mr. Parkman's Tour," the anonymously-published piece offered high praise: Parkman's writing style was "easy and free" (232), his personae as compellingly rendered as they were diverse, and his narrative a wellspring of romantic adventure. "[I]n short," wrote Melville towards the end of the review:

he who desires to quit Broadway and the Bowery—though only in fancy—for the region of wampum and calumet, the land of beavers and buffalo—birch canoes and 'smoked buckskin shirts' will do well to read Mr. Parkman's book. There he will fall in with the veritable grandsons of Daniel Boon; with the Mormons; with warparties; with Santa Fe traders; with General Kearney; with runaway United States troops; and all manner of outlandish and interesting characters [. . .] The book, in brief, is excellent, and has the true wild-game flavor. (233)

Melville, however, had significantly attenuated his endorsement at the beginning of the review, which skewered *Oregon Trail* on rhetorical and political grounds. He opened his critique by asserting there was "nothing about California or Oregon in the book"—an

omission that rendered Parkman's title not only "ill-chosen" (230), but even emblematic of the high-flown propagandizing that by mid-century had become synonymous with Americans' representational West. His response to Parkman's treatment of the Indian was more critical still; though sympathetic to *Oregon Trail*'s prefatory rejection of the noble savage caricature, Melville argued that the text only traded in equally false (and equally popular) stereotypes of Indian barbarism and depravity. Maintaining a tense balance between praise and condemnation of *Oregon Trail*, "Mr. Parkman's Tour" reflected Melville's close identification with the United States' ambivalence towards the meaning and consequences of westward expansion.¹

This chapter explores the conflicted and increasingly skeptical engagement with U.S. expansionist rhetoric that informed Melville's writing from the late 1840s through the beginning of the 1850s.² Organized into three sections, my discussion begins with a look at Melville's first and most successful book, *Typee* (1846), which appropriated many of the staples of the frontier travel writing genre he would find so well-developed in *Oregon Trail*. In its depiction of the interplay between Anglo-Europeans and the racial and international Other, I argue, both *Typee* and the public's response to it reflected extant tensions between the prevailing tenets of expansionist doctrine and subsurface registers of counter-imperial dissent. Second, I more closely examine the opening sections of "Mr. Parkman's Tour," and suggest that far from offering a uniquely dissenting perspective, Melville's review tapped into familiar lines of critique from the political and literary spheres to deconstruct the racialized triumphalism underpinning *Oregon Trail*. Finally, I address Melville's ambivalent treatment of hunting in *Moby-*

Dick (1851), and note that although in a real sense paying tribute to the conquest ideologies freighted American attitudes towards the western frontier, Melville's engagement with the literary hunt simultaneously enacted a powerful articulation of the antebellum counter-imperial impulse.

***Typee* and Manifest Destiny**

Though set in the South Pacific Isles, *Typee*'s setting and dramatic situation renders the book in many ways as representative of the antebellum literary West as *Oregon Trail*.³ Through his narrator, Tommo, Melville replicates the formula of a civilized white man sojourning among untamed landscapes and peoples whose conquest his presence portends; primarily through repeated, familiar appeals to inevitability, Tommo frames the aborigines' civilization as an unviable alternative to the social order he has temporarily abandoned. As Lucy Maddox has argued, Tommo's warrant that the *Typee* are fated to annihilation echoes George Catlin's widely-read treatment of the "Indian question" in *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* (1841). While Melville and Catlin were in "general agreement about Anglo-European misconceptions of the 'savage' other," writes Maddox, each of these two books nevertheless advance the notion that "uncivilized people are immediately contaminated and degraded by contact with white civilization" (58-59). In the end, *Typee* forecloses the possibility of peaceful co-existence between the drastically different cultural models that it portrays—even though Tommo throughout emphasizes the islanders' humanity and favorably contrasts aspects of their communitarianism

against the commodity-based civilization from which he hails.⁴ Speaking to this foreclosure, John Bryant has rightly noted that Tommo proves “finally less convinced of his rhetoric than we are. Rather than inventing for Tommo a sentimental departure full of longing and regret, Melville has him skedaddle the moment he gets the chance” (“Introduction” x).⁵

But Tommo’s eagerness to return home far less affirms the Us/Them binary undergirding antebellum conquest ideologies than do the acts of violence that consecrate his departure. Midway through *Typee*’s final chapter—uniquely void of subtitles and entitled “The Escape”—Melville briefly offers the possibility of Tommo leaving on amicable terms with the islanders. Not only does the elder chieftain, Marheyo, give orders that Tommo be allowed to leave unmolested, but in a gesture of transcultural sympathy he repeatedly utters “the only two English words I had taught him—‘Home’ and ‘Mother’” (248); describing the tears of his two closest companions on the island, Fayaway and Kory-Kory, Tommo appears poised to infuse *Typee*’s final scene with elements of “longing and regret.” Marheyo, however, only represents one contingent in a heated deliberation among the islanders over Tommo’s release, and as Tommo makes his move to row away, violence erupts. The ensuing battle climaxes when a recently introduced chief named Mow-Mow attempts to board Tommo’s vessel:

The athletic islander, with his tomahawk between his teeth, was dashing the water before him till it foamed again. He was the nearest to us, and in another instant he would have seized one of the oars. Even at the moment

I felt horror at the act I was about to commit; but it was no time for pity or compunction, and with a true aim, and exerting all my strength, I dashed the boat-hook at him. It struck him just below the throat, and forced him downwards [. . .] Only one other of the savages reached the boat. He seized the gunwale, but the knives of our rowers so mauled his wrists, that he was forced to quit his hold, and the next minute we were past them all, and in safety.⁶ (252)

Instead of a moment filled with reluctant goodbyes and abundant gift-giving, then, Melville concludes the action of his narrative with a scene in which Anglo-European whalers lacerate the wrists of a pursuing “savage,” and in which the protagonist nearly kills one of the Typee chieftains. “[N]ever shall I forget,” Tommo says of Mow-Mow, “the ferocious expression of his countenance” (252). With this final image of the Typee, Melville’s book affirms prevailing antebellum notions of an irreconcilable hostility between Anglo-Europeans and the aboriginal Other.

Still, *Typee* articulates a degree of counter-imperial sensibility that sets it in sharp contrast to most frontier literatures of Melville’s era—and especially in the text’s unexpurgated form,⁷ this sensibility at times makes a credible play for thematic primacy. *Oregon Trail*, for instance, would contain nothing comparable to Tommo’s “Reflections on Europeans’ Cruelties,” which draws attention to the “disparity between the way in which we regard acts of violence carried out on our behalf, and those that are perpetrated against us” (Curtis 38). On learning of the “enormities perpetrated [. . .] upon some of

the inoffensive islanders,” Tommo observes, “we coolly censure them as wrong, impolitic, needlessly severe, and dangerous to the crews of other vessels.” But when we learn of similar deeds committed against our own:

how we sympathize for the unhappy victims, and with what horror do we regard the diabolical heathens, who, after all, have but avenged the unprovoked injuries which they have received. We breathe nothing but vengeance, and equip armed vessels to traverse thousands of miles of ocean in order to execute summary punishment upon the offenders. On arriving at their destination, they burn, slaughter, and destroy, according to the tenor of written instructions, and sailing away from the scene of devastation, call upon all Christendom to applaud their courage and their justice. (27)

This stark portrait of Anglo-European cynicism and hypocrisy represents one of several moments in *Typee* where Tommo appears to invite readers to stake an outright preference for the islanders’ mode of civilization—even if the narrator can never quite bring himself to such a judgment.

After ceding that the islanders’ cannibalism comes off as a “rather bad trait in their character,” for instance, Tommo goes on to qualify this remark by launching into an extended critique of “that custom only a few years since practiced in enlightened England,” where a convicted criminal “had his head lopped off with a huge axe, his

bowels dragged out and thrown into a fire; while his body, carved into four quarters, was with his head exposed upon pikes, and permitted to rot and fester among the public haunts of men!” From this vicious portrait of contemporary English justice and his equally harsh reference to the “remorseless cruelty” of the United States’ prison system, Tommo draws a provocative conclusion:

The fiend-like skill we display in the invention of all manner of death-dealing engines; the vindictiveness with which we carry on our wars, and the misery and desolation that follow in their train, are enough of themselves to distinguish the white civilized man as the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth [. . .] it is needless to multiply the examples of civilized barbarity; they far exceed in the amount of misery they cause the crimes which we regard with such abhorrence in our less-enlightened fellow-creatures. (125)

Unsurprisingly, such straightforward, combative social critique provoked an equally strong response from reviewers. The Boston *Universalist Review* praised *Typee*’s artistry, but suggested that “the voluptuousness, which reigned in the valley of the Typee, had somewhat affected” Melville’s thinking. While admitting that the civilizing process brought “partial inconveniences, and even downright evils” upon colonized peoples, the reviewer chided Melville for omitting the “general good” wrought by bringing such peoples “from a life of mere animal pleasure to one of intellectual and

moral enjoyment” (327). Less gently disposed to the book, a writer for the *American Review* expressed the hope, “as Mr. Melville has now reached home, that he is duly sensible of the great hardships and evils of civilization, and that he will hasten his return to the society he has so cleverly described in these volumes” (*Melville Log* 212).

Like many of *Typee*’s detractors in the press, what the writer for the *American Review* found most objectionable was Tommo’s demonization of the Polynesian missionaries and their stateside benefactors. In the manner of a Garrisonian haranguing Northern enablers of slavery, Tommo lambastes “certain tea-party excitements under the influence of which [. . .] old ladies in spectacles, and young ladies in sober russet low gowns, contribute sixpences towards the creation of a fund, the object of which is to ameliorate the spiritual condition of the Polynesians, but whose end has almost invariably been to accomplish their temporal destruction!” (195). Condemning the immoral uses to which such funds were being put, Tommo invokes the worst popular associations of the Southern plantation owner: the missionary’s wife in Hawaii rides about “in a little go-cart drawn by two of the islanders,” and when the “pair of *draught* bipeds” gets stuck at the bottom of an incline, the “good lady loses all patience [. . .] and rap goes the heavy handle of her huge fan across the naked skull of the old savage” (197). At the conclusion of his indictment, Tommo asks that readers “who from pure religious motives contribute to the support of this enterprise, should take care to ascertain that their donations, flowing through many devious channels, at last effect their legitimate object” (198).

Having radically upended the moral dynamic of white women's popularly conceived magnanimous relationship to the racial and international Other, Melville had placed an irresistible target on his book.⁸ An anonymous reviewer for the *New Englander* pronounced Melville "utterly incapable, from moral obtuseness, of an accurate statement," and went on to complain: "if he meets a native female Islander, she is a goddess;—if a missionary's wife, she is a blowzy-looking, red-faced oppressor of the poor native." Pulling no punches, this writer enlisted burgeoning anti-Mormon rhetoric to illustrate the depth of Melville's heresy: "as to the writer's ability to treat on some of the matters of his volume, it would rank well with Joseph Smith's competency to give an exegetical work on the book of Genesis" (449-450). A writer for the *New York Evangelist* similarly observed, "[t]he book abounds in praises of the life of nature, *alias* savageism, and in slurs and flings against missionaries and civilization [. . .] We are sorry that such a volume should have been allowed a place in the 'Library for American Books'" (*Melville Log* 210-211). And in a scorching ten-page writeup entitled "Typee: The Traducer of Missions," a writer for the *Christian Parlor Magazine* declared of the book:

It is redundant with bitter charges against the missionaries, piles obloquy upon their labor and its results, and broadly accuses them of being the cause of the vice, misery, destitution, and unhappiness of the Polynesians wherever they have penetrated [. . .] We shall probably give Typee a glance among the authorities, as a specimen of that genus of writers

whose poetry and poetic feelings lead them to admire only what is savage, and condemn, under assumed pretexts, the ripening fruit of the gospel of Christ. (quoted in Parker and Hayford 482).

Such responses to *Typee* indicate that while Melville's text was ostensibly about Europeans in Polynesia, his readership had little difficulty interpreting it as specifically repudiating "the American myth of the redeemer nation" (Gerlach 5). Indeed, *Typee*'s sustained, sub-textual juxtaposition of hypocritical Anglo-Europeans against innocent aborigines transgressed what Delbanco rightly identifies as the United States' "official line" at mid-century: "the white man's expansion first across North America and then, by the 1840s, into the Pacific, was literally a godsend: a divinely ordained step leading humankind out of darkness and into light" (Delbanco 47).⁹

Published into such a politically charged atmosphere, there can be little wonder at some of the vitriol with which *Typee* was greeted.¹⁰ Yet at the same time, the extent to which the book's political contentiousness contributed to its market success merits more speculation than has been allowed by Melville scholars and historians of the era. Delbanco, for example, entirely overlooks this possible explanation for *Typee*'s popularity, which he attributes instead to its titillating aspect: "With its lubricous accounts of oil rubs and orgies, *Typee* gave its author a measure of fame and even attracted to him the nineteenth-century equivalent of a rock star's groupies: 'you dear creature,' one woman beseeched him in a feverish fan letter, 'I want to see you so amazingly'" (71). Similarly, Robert Johannsen has explained *Typee*'s mass appeal on

almost entirely aesthetic grounds: “Before *Typee*, travel writing concentrated on facts, observations, and opinions, ‘everything but the *picturesque*.’ Melville supplied the missing ingredient” (147). Yet, a survey of *Typee*’s numerous positive reviews reveals that while many sidestepped the book’s inflammatory elements, others embraced it on expressly ideological and/or political grounds.

The prestigious *Graham’s Magazine*, for example, enthused that Melville “at times almost loses his loyalty to civilization and the Anglo-Saxon race. His pen riots in describing the felicity of the Typee; and their occasional indulgence in a little cannibalism, he is inclined to regard somewhat as an amiable weakness, or, at least, as not being worse than the many practices sanctioned by polite nations.” This review uncritically extracted Tommo’s claim that the white man was “the most ferocious creature on the face of the earth,” and as though representing a legitimate point of view, observed: “he seems to think sailors and missionaries have carried little to the barbarous nations that have come under his notice, but disease, starvation, and death.” Dominated by reference to *Typee*’s contentious politics, the short review concluded by noting, “his descriptions are doubtless transcripts of facts, not imagination, sounding as they do, ‘as bad as truth.’ Those who desire a ‘Peep at Polynesian Life,’ had by all means better obtain his work.” (240). Reviewing *Typee* in the *Salem Advertiser*, meanwhile, Nathaniel Hawthorne found the book much in accord with his own perspectivist leanings: Melville, he wrote, “has that freedom of view—it would be too harsh to call it laxity of principle—which renders him tolerant of codes of morals that may be little in accordance with our own” (quoted in Parker and Hayford 474). And in an 1847 review

appearing in his popular *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley deplored *Typee*'s "diseased [. . .] moral tone," but nevertheless praised the book for its "lucid and apparently candid testimony with regard to the value, the effect, and the defects of the Missionary labors among the South Sea Islanders" (quoted in Parker and Hayford 486-487).

Other endorsements of *Typee* went even further in embracing the book's counter-imperial subtext. Writing in the *Tribune* a year before Greeley's review would appear in its pages, Margaret Fuller—whose own counter-imperial allegiances had intensified while under Greeley's employ—argued, "[w]ith a view to ascertaining the truth, it would be well if the sewing societies, now engaged in providing funds for such enterprises, would read" the charges Melville had levied, and "make inquiries in consequence, before going on with their efforts" (quoted in Bean and Myerson 400-401). Reviewing *Typee* in the *Harbinger*, Brook Farmer and leading Transcendentalist George Ripley extracted the text's most inflammatory passages as evidentiary support for his own reformist agenda. Ripley decried the "civilized vices and diseases, which act upon the South Sea Islanders with the same fatality as upon the Indians of our continent" (264); further, he welcomed *Typee*'s anti-slavery overtones, and roundly applauded the islanders' communitarian lifestyle as an indictment on what he considered the United States' economically oppressive system. "How is it," Ripley asked, "that without our learning or our religion these cannibals can thus put to shame the most refined and Christian societies?" (265). Similarly, in an 1847 review essay of both *Typee* and *Omoo* entitled "Polynesian Cannibalism vs. American Slavery," the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* derived strong abolitionist and anti-imperialist lessons from the former work:

It proved [. . .] that Slavery is not [. . .] indigenous to the tropics, and, like mosquitoes, always most troublesome when the weather is hottest [. . .] One dead enemy was sufficient to feast a whole tribe of Typees; but with us, a hundred slaves hardly suffice to furnish food for one Southern family. We would advise our readers who are sick at heart, from reading the daily reports of the murders committed by our army in Mexico; or of the inhuman cruelties of our slaveholders in the South [. . .] to turn for relief to the amiable savages of Typee, whose greatest cruelty consists in devouring the body of an enemy who has been killed in a hand-to-hand scuffle. (quoted in Parker and Hayford 485).

Barely beneath the surface of its conventionally Anglo-exceptionalist narrative, Melville's literary debut had struck a deeply sympathetic chord with the United States' counter-imperial contingent. No less than the terms of its condemnation, the praise *Typee* received from literary and cultural critics suggest that the book had registered less as an emblem of the "picturesque" than as an intentional contribution to charged, expansion-related contestations.

By the same token, *Typee*'s impressive sales totals with the general public cannot be adequately addressed outside the context of Americans' high level of imaginative investment in the "Oregon question," Indian Removal, slavery, and the Mexican War. Not only did the book sell "roughly six thousand copies in its first two years," but it also

led Harper Brothers to offer Melville “a relatively generous contract for *Omoo*, including a \$400 advance” (Delbanco 68, 72-73). And although we can of course never precisely identify the reasons *Typee* earned such broad appeal among contemporary readers, it nevertheless seems likely that the book’s political contentiousness significantly contributed to its commercial achievement. In any case, the passionate response *Typee* evoked in its initial form, across a gamut of literary, religious, and political periodicals, could hardly have been scrubbed from the public mind by the subsequent release of revised, tamer editions.

Goldfields and Indians: Skepticism and Counter-Imperial Dissent in “Mr. Parkman’s Tour”

Appearing in print midway between the publications of *Typee* and *Moby-Dick*, “Mr. Parkman’s Tour” was the production of a writer fully attuned to the conflicted nature of the United States’ imaginative investment in the West, and the hyperbolic discourse backing that investment was the subject of Melville’s opening section.¹¹ His ostensible target was the geographic inaccuracy of Parkman’s title; though acknowledging that on the most literal level, the trail Parkman followed would in fact have led him to the Pacific region had he chosen to take it that far, Melville reminded readers: “it would also be part of the route followed by a traveler bound due West from Missouri to Peking or Bombay. But we again appeal to any sensible man whether the ‘Peking and Bombay Trail’ would be a correct title for a book of travels in a region lying East of the Rocky Mountains” (231). Writing off this part of the review as merely a

“captious jibe” which “soon dwindled to haggling over the semantics of the word ‘trail,’” Thomas Altherr has suggested that Melville was “adding filler for pay for all the good this argument did to advance the review” (2). But like the review’s subsequent, more famous attack on Parkman’s treatment of the American Indian, Melville’s opening critique was more interested in deconstructing the broader sociopolitical discourses from which *Oregon Trail* had emerged, than in offering an isolated evaluation of a travel book.

Melville made it clear that his issue with the title centered on the burgeoning propaganda with which it was commiserate. As though uttering a sigh he wrote, “here we must remind all authors of a fact which sometimes seems to slip from their memory,” and pointed out that unlike the names of men, those denoting books “are presumed to express the contents.” Displaying his signature mix of dry humor and biting social critique, Melville continued:

although, during this present gold fever, patriotic fathers have a perfect right to christen their offspring “Sacramento,” or “California”; we deny this privilege to authors, with respect to their books [. . .] For the correctness of our judgment in this matter we are willing to appeal to any sensible man in the community (provided he has no thought of emigrating to the gold region); nay, we will leave the matter to Mr. Parkman himself.

(230)

Twice he framed his complaint as an “appeal to any sensible man,” and twice he juxtaposed this hypothetical man against those afflicted with “gold fever.” In the exaggerated associations with wealth and opportunity accumulating around the American West, Melville located a form of cultural insanity.

It is not surprising that Parkman’s title would have thus put Melville in mind of the region’s most far-flung, romantic connotations. By 1849 the words “Oregon” and “California” had come to signify cheap land, dignified self-employment, and untapped gold for all who would have them. As Sarah Quay observes, the latter half of the 1840s witnessed the emergence of a cottage industry of books by the hundreds, sporting such titles as “*A Journey to California* (1841), *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* (1845), and *The Gold Regions of California* (1845).” Most such works were “deeply deceptive” and “notoriously inaccurate in their information,” writes Quay, but they were also quite arguably “the best advertisements available for westward expansion, and they can be credited with inducing pioneers to travel west” (156). Though propaganda extolling the benefits of westward emigration had been a familiar element of American culture throughout the nineteenth century, during the 1840s and early 1850s, land offices, railroad executives, newspaper editors, advertisers, and book publishers collectively wrought unprecedented levels of promotionalism.

Emigrant boosters filled their rhetoric with religious overtones. “The Oregon emigrants from the Platte purchase,” read a typical advertisement in the *St. Louis Gazette*, “will rendezvous opposite this place on the 15th of April next, preparatory to their *departure for the land of promise*. We give this notice in due time, in order that others

from the adjoining counties, or other States, who have resolved upon going to Oregon may know at what point to assemble. Emigrants can be supplied in this place with all necessary outfits” (quoted in Quay 46, my emphasis). Appearing in February 1846, this announcement was designed to assist prospective emigrants in the formation of a large party, thereby making their journey safer and easier; but its matter-of-fact reference to the “land of promise” traded in a constructed evangelization of the West that benefited the railroads and various mercantile entities already occupying frontier towns.

One of the most emblematic personalities of this hype was John Charles Frémont (or as he quickly came to be known, “the Pathfinder”), a military officer and scientist who led three westward expeditions in 1842, 1843, and 1845-1846 respectively. Due in no small measure to the United States’ escalating territorial disputes with Great Britain and Mexico, by the time Frémont reported his findings from the first two cross-country trips, the mystique of Oregon and California had already become impressed into the public consciousness. Still, fascination with these territories spiked in direct consequence of Frémont’s reports which, “struck off government printing presses in 1843 and 1845, would pass from hand to hand in city precincts of the crowded East and from farmstead to farmstead in the Mississippi Valley, helping to touch off a folk movement that would set thousands of people in westward motion within a decade” (Golay, *Tide of Empire* 221-222). Excerpting from Frémont’s celebrated 1845 report on the Pacific west, the *Niles National Register* declared that the explorer “deserves to have a monument erected to his memory upon the peak of the highest mountain he has or shall attain, for the light he has already shed upon the world, from those heretofore

unexplored recesses, projections, reservoirs, and other wonders of our planet” (quoted in Golay 297-298).

The buzz surrounding Frémont, however, was only a prelude to the crescendo that followed Polk’s address to Congress on December 5th 1848, which validated long-circulating rumors that gold had been discovered in California. Almost a year previous to the president’s announcement, a mill contractor named James Marshall had struck gold in what would become Sacramento; the news “reached Hawaii in June and Oregon in August. By fall, Mexico, Peru, and Chile had learned of Marshall’s gold. All began to send miners north” (White 191). Unsurprisingly, American newspaper editors wasted little time in feeding the frenzy set off by Polk’s confirmation of the discovery. The soon-to-be author of *Moby-Dick* would doubtless have appreciated a representative editorial that appeared in the *Nantucket Inquirer* only a day after Polk’s address, and which proclaimed California “likely to prove a perfect *El Dorado* [. . .] Portions of it are reputed to be almost paved with gold” (quoted in Dolin 211). By the beginning of 1849, not only Americans, but emigrants from around the world were converging on California, and “the non-Indian population of the state increased from about 14,000 in 1848 to 223,856 in 1852” (White 191).

At the same time, California’s associations with wealth and revitalization also involved a persistent counter-discourse which represented westward-moving emigrants on the whole, and the gold rushers in particular, as easily manipulated dupes. As White points out, “‘Gold fever’ was what nineteenth-century Americans in general called the

reaction created by news of the discovery of gold. This metaphor of lunacy,” he continues:

recurs repeatedly in descriptions of the California Gold Rush. Most observers described the effect produced by the news of the discovery as a sort of temporary derangement. In April of 1849, according to one of Sutter’s employees, Sutter’s own workers “seemed to have gone insane.” In May displays of gold in San Francisco reduced that town from approximately 1,000 people to less than 100 as its inhabitants stampeded for the mines. A visiting U.S. naval captain, watching this nearly hysterical exodus to the mountains, wrote that “nothing but the introduction of lunatic asylums can effect a cure.” (191)

The rhetorics of mental illness that White describes infiltrated even the most soaring, optimistic treatments of westward emigration. James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald*, for example, would seem an odd outlet for even briefly associating the California migrations with desperation or insanity.¹² Nevertheless, three months before Melville addressed “gold fever” in “Mr. Parkman’s Tour,” Bennett had opined: “The spirit of emigration which is carrying off thousands to California increases and expands every day. All classes of our citizens seem to be under the influence of this extraordinary mania” (quoted in Quay 7). Entrepreneurs and laborers who actually experienced the California gold rush rendered personal accounts that elaborated on the

pejorative associations Bennett and other penny paper editors only perfunctorily indulged. As Limerick has observed, in the almost instantly corporatized mining scene, narratives of high-yield self-employment quickly gave way to questions such as: “What was a fair profit? What was a just distribution of rewards? Why was it that the man who worked the hardest—the man who dug the earth, shoveled the rock, sorted the ore—often earned the least? And how much did a man give up—in dignity, in autonomy, in freedom—when his livelihood depended on wages, when other people’s decisions controlled his labor?” (98).¹³

When he published “Mr. Parkman’s Tour,” Melville was simultaneously enlisting his own fiction to deplore California’s horrific mining conditions. In *Mardi*—published the same month as his review of Parkman—he wrote:

Gold is the only poverty; of all glittering ills the direst [. . .] After the glittering spoil, by strange river-margins, and beneath impending cliffs, thousands delve in quicksands; and, sudden, sink in graves of their own making: with gold dust mingling their own ashes. Still deeper, in more solid ground, other thousands slave; and pile their earth so high, they gasp for air, and die; their comrades mounting on them, and delving still, and dying—grave piled on grave! Here, one haggard hunter murders another in his pit; and murdering, himself is murdered by a third. Shrieks and groans! cries and curses! It seems a golden Hell! (547)

Read in light of what was taking place on the California ground at the time of *Mardi*'s publication, the striking vision of despair pervading this passage comes across more as a journalistic dispatch from San Francisco than as a fictional rendering. Reviewing *Oregon Trail* in the *Literary World*, Melville took advantage of a nonfiction genre to similarly address the realities of the gold rush. His repeated references to "gold fever" and appeals to "any sensible man" hardly constituted "filler for pay," but rather a critical engagement with the propagandistic work that Parkman's title represented.

The second section of "Mr. Parkman's Tour" attacked *Oregon Trail* more directly, on the grounds that the book regurgitated the era's most degrading anti-Indian stereotypes. Rather than replacing the sentimental caricature of the noble savage with a more accurate portrayal of Indian life, Melville argued, Parkman had merely replaced one set of falsities for another: "when in the body of the book we are informed that it is difficult for any white man, after a domestication among the Indians, to hold them much better than brutes; when we are told too, that to such a person, the slaughter of an Indian is indifferent as the slaughter of a buffalo; with all deference, we beg leave to dissent" (231). In the long paragraph that followed, and as he had done with his treatment of the "gold fever" craze, Melville shifted his focus from calling out Parkman's inaccuracies to critiquing the broad-based rhetoric from which *Oregon Trail* had stemmed.

He began his counterargument with a teleological appeal to the whites' and Indians' shared humanity:

It is too often the case that civilized beings sojourning among savages soon come to regard them with disdain and contempt. But though in many cases this feeling is almost natural, it is not defensible; and it is wholly wrong. Why should we condemn them?—Because we are better than they? Assuredly not [. . .] When we affect to condemn savages, we should remember that by doing so we asperse our own progenitors; for they were savages also [. . .] Why, among the very Thugs of India, or the bloody Dyaks of Borneo, exists the germ of all that is intellectually elevated and grand” (231).¹⁴

Considering the Indian’s potential destiny by Anglo-European standards of progress, Melville to an extent echoed *Typee*’s foreclosure of a transcultural coexistence between differing *modes* of civilization. Similarly, his approach can be taken to illustrate Maddox’s point that “[n]o matter where they begin,” in taking up the “Indian question” nineteenth-century authors “almost always end [. . .] at the virtually impassable stone wall of the choice between civilization and extinction for the Indians” (8). But on the other hand, Melville’s straightforward assertion of the whites’ and Indians’ common historical trajectory stands in marked contrast to the atmosphere of irreconcilable hostility with which he had concluded *Typee*. Further, unlike the assimilationist rhetoric that Maddox takes to task in *Removals* (and notwithstanding, after all, Maddox’s persistent dismissal of the very real distinction represented by “the choice between civilization and extinction”), Melville upholds the Indian’s civilizational potential as a

question independent of the whites' paternalistic influence. Indeed, his repudiation of Anglo-exceptionalism represented a poignant site of dissent from what was arguably the cornerstone of antebellum expansionist doctrine.

It is important to recognize, however, that in decrying Indians' dehumanization at the hands of a popular American writer, Melville was not offering up a new line of argument. As early as February 1814, Washington Irving had argued in the popular *Analectic Magazine* that those responsible for the nation's literature were at least as complicit in the systemic dehumanization of Native American peoples as were the settlers and government officials who forcibly displaced them. In the essay, entitled "Traits of Indian Character," Irving observed:

It has been the lot of the unfortunate aborigines of this country to be doubly wronged by the white men—first, driven from their native soil by the sword of the invader, and then darkly slandered by the pen of the historian. The former has treated them like the beasts of the forest; the latter has written volumes to justify him in his outrages. The former found it easier to exterminate than to civilize; the latter to abuse than to discriminate. The hideous appellations of savage and pagan, were sufficient to sanction the deadly hostilities of both. (145)

In another *Analectic* installment appearing in June of the same year—"Philip of Pokanoket: An Indian Memoir"—Irving continued in much the same argumentative

vein; this second piece honored the iconic seventeenth-century Pequot chieftain, and attacked “those early writers, who treated of the discovery and settlement of our country,” but who failed to provide “more frequent and candid accounts of the remarkable characters that flourished in savage life” (502).¹⁵ While specifically targeting historiographers from the early colonial period to his own contemporary moment, Irving’s complaints were reflective of a nineteenth-century debate over how, and to what extent, the Indian ought to be represented in the development of a multi-generic, distinctly American literary tradition.

The commercial success achieved by authors such as Cooper, Sedgwick, George Caitlin, Lydia Marie Child, and John Heckwelder suggested an appreciable degree of audience openness to the sensibilities Irving, and later Melville, expressed. Indeed, in the Preface to *Hope Leslie* (1827), Sedgwick echoed Irving’s indictment of the Indian’s historical literary abuse by Anglo-European authors, while also articulating the sociopolitical sensibilities that Melville would take up with such vigor in his 1849 review. Setting up the novel’s perspectivist approach to white/Indian relations, Sedgwick notes in her Preface that “it was perhaps natural” that the early American settlers would depict Native Americans as “‘surly dogs,’ who preferred to die rather than live, from no other motive than a stupid or malignant obstinacy.” Yet, she continues, the Indians’ “own historians or poets, if they had such, would as naturally, and with more justice, have extolled their high-souled courage and patriotism.” After noting that her heroic portrayal of Magawisca reflects a literary commitment “not to the actual, but the

possible,” Sedgwick arrives at a provocative engagement with prevailing rhetorics of Anglo-exceptionalism:

The liberal philanthropist will not be offended by a representation which supposes that the elements of virtue and intellect are not withheld from any branch of the human family; and the enlightened and accurate observer of human nature, will admit that the difference of character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition. (3-4)

Much like Cooper was in the process of doing with his “Leatherstocking tales,” *Hope Leslie* in the end invokes her function as a writer of historical fiction to conveniently “disappear” Indians Anglo-American trajectory the novel is in the business of telling, while at the same time performing an appreciable degree of sympathy for the Native Americans’ plight at a time when the Removal controversies were in full force.¹⁶ Yet also like Cooper’s novels, *Hope Leslie*’s popularity suggests that such sympathies obtained appreciable resonance in the public mind; in her 1998 editor’s Introduction to the novel, Carolyn Karcher notes that it catapulted Sedgwick to “the apex of her literary fame,” and during the nineteenth century alone went through “nine printings—five in the United States and four in England” (xxxiii). When Melville explained the Indian’s comparatively “savage” state not as a marker of racial limitation but as a reflection of

teleology and social conditioning, he was advancing arguments which his contemporaries had long been acquainted.¹⁷

Conversely, prominent figures from the journalistic, religious, and political spheres lined up to express their disdain for the romantically-distorted Indian associated with Cooper, Sedgwick, and other popular authors of the antebellum period. Michigan Governor Lewis Cass, for example (who would soon become Andrew Jackson's secretary of war), attacked both Heckwelder and Cooper in an 1828 essay published in the prominent *North American Review*. Cass advised readers to remember that the "Indians of Mr. Heckwelder" were not to be confused with "the fierce and crafty warriors and hunters, that roam through our forests" (quoted in Maddox 45).¹⁸ There was of course no lack of American authors willing to proliferate the most extreme stereotypes of Indian savagery that critics like Cass upheld as realistic. From the shadowy, quasi-demonic Indians lurking in Charles Brockden Brown's popular *Edgar Huntly* (1799) to Thomas Bangs Thorpe's brutally-comedic, short-fiction portrayals of subhuman Indians in the 1840s and early 1850s, there flourished a literary tradition of Indian depravity compared with which Parkman's Ogillallah tribe appear paragons of benign civilization.

Perhaps no text exemplifies this tradition to a greater extent than Robert Montgomery Bird's popular novel, *Nick of the Woods; Or The Jibbenainosay: A Tale of Kentucky* (1837), which introduced one of the literature's most enduring Indian fighters in Nathan Slaughter. Late into *Nick of the Woods*, readers learn that Slaughter (whose fellow Kentuckians make much of disparaging his seeming adherence to Quaker

pacifism) years ago lost his entire family to marauding Shawnees, and has since devoted himself to eradicating the entire Indian race. A man of peace and good humor in the public eye, Slaughter not only makes a secret practice of murdering Shawnees, but also of taking their scalps and carving the sign of the cross into their lifeless torsos.¹⁹ Known as the “Jibbenainosay” (“Spirit-that-walks”) by the Indians that he stalks with single-minded purpose, Slaughter contributed significantly to the mass popularization of the “Indian hater” archetype which James Hall had explored in his western sketches of the late 1820s and 1830s, and which Melville, twenty years later, would aggressively interrogate in *The Confidence Man*.

Appearing in the midst of controversy surrounding the Cherokees’ impending forced removal from Georgia, Bird’s novel undoubtedly obtained much of its appeal through its capacity for justifying the United States’ westward march. As historian Richard Drinnon has noted, “Through a Quaker man of peace, [Bird] demonstrated the horrifying consequences that would have awaited other Anglo-Americans had they acted on such principles of nonviolence and goodwill [. . .] Bird’s allegory helped citizens believe they might proceed in good conscience with ‘emptying’ [. . .] the Eastern states of those merciless savages still ambulatory” (158). Like the rhetorics of Manifest Destiny employed by newspaper editors, politicians, and authors to validate the United States’ claims on northern Mexico and the Oregon territory, the “Indian hater” of popular literature functioned as a necessary instrument of appeal designed to attenuate the public’s moral reservations over Indian Removal.

But *Nick of the Woods* also evoked condemnation for its treatment of the Indian. Perhaps the most notable detraction appeared in historical novelist and literary critic Harrison Ainsworth's Introduction to the British edition of the novel, published at the same time as its American counterpart. Much as Melville would do in his review of Parkman, Ainsworth effused praise for Bird's meticulously-detailed setting, his engaging characters, his action-packed narrative, and what he termed the overall "genius displayed in the present work" (viii). However, in the long opening paragraph of his essay, Ainsworth took strong exception to Bird's anti-Indian rhetoric. After describing the "savage Indian" as "scarcely less savage" than the "Back-woodsman, the latter of whom, nevertheless, boasts his connection to the civilized world," Ainsworth wrote: "The sympathy of European nations is enlisted on the side of the Red Man, who is remorselessly hunted from his lands and possessions by his Anglo-American invaders." In the novel's portrayal of Indians as "wretches stained by every vice, and having no one redeeming quality," Ainsworth identified a thinly-disguised political agenda. "Dr. Bird's views on this subject," he observed, "are colored by a national antipathy, and by *a desire to justify the encroachments of his countrymen upon the persecuted natives*, rather than by a reasonable estimate of the subject" (v-vi, my emphasis). Predating Drinnon's study by a century and a half, Ainsworth's rhetorical analysis of *Nick of the Woods* reminds us that current critical emphases on the intersection between U.S. conquest ideologies and the nation's popular culture were quite familiar to the age of Manifest Destiny.

Bird himself took Ainsworth's line of critique seriously enough that he vigorously refuted it in his Preface to the second edition of *Nick of the Woods*, published in 1853.²⁰ Complaining that Cooper and other authors had "stereotyped in the public mind" a "poetical illusion over the Indian character," Bird framed his own work as a necessary, realistic corrective. Reminding readers of his oft-expressed belief that the Indian could be civilized, but only if subjected to Anglo-European influences, he wrote: "The Indian is doubtless a gentleman; but he is a gentleman who wears a very dirty shirt, and lives a very miserable life [. . .] in his natural barbaric state, he is a barbarian, and it is not possible he could be anything else" (32). Turning to address Ainsworth (whom he called out by name) and other critics who had accused him of intentionally exacerbating anti-Indian prejudice in the public mind, Bird insisted that his objectivity had been conflated with maliciousness:

Having, therefore, no other, and certainly, no worse, desire than to make his delineations in this regard as correct and true to nature as he could, it was with no little surprise he found himself taken to account by some of the critical gentry, on the charge of entertaining the humane design of influencing the passions of his countrymen against the remnant of an unfortunate race, with a view of excusing the wrongs done to it by the whites, if not of actually hastening the period of that "final destruction" which it pleases so many men, against all probability, if not against all possibility, to predict as a certain future event. (33)

Prefacing a novel whose title character personifies nothing short of doctrinal genocide, Bird's populist disparagement of the "critical gentry" who predicted the Indian's physical annihilation presented contemporary readers with an irony made all the more palpable by events spanning the first and second editions of *Nick of the Woods*.

Between 1837 and 1853 the Indian presence had been almost entirely removed from territories east of the Mississippi, and tribes concentrated throughout the West had fared only marginally better than their eastern counterparts.²¹ Further, between the first and second editions of Bird's novel, debate over the "Indian question" had for the most part shifted to fringe status in the mainstream political discourse; though during the first three decades of the century Indian-rights advocacy permeated the religious, journalistic, and political spheres, by mid-century the Indians' relentless series of defeats had left many prominent reformers resigned to the outcome that Bird so cavalierly dismissed in his 1853 Preface.²² Additionally, debate over Indian Removal became subsumed during this period, first by annexation controversies that climaxed with the United States' invasion of Mexico, and then by the increasingly transcendent national divide over slavery.

However, Bird's defensive rejoinder to his critics illustrates that in the *literary sphere*, the moral quality of white-Indian relations very much remained an active site of inquiry and contestation at mid-century.²³ Among Bird's contemporary admirers was Parkman, who wrote in *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851): "chronicles of the American borders are filled with the deeds of men, who, having lost all by the merciless tomahawk, have lived for vengeance alone; and such men will never cease to exist so

long as a hostile tribe remains within striking distance of an American settlement.” In a footnote to this statement, Parkman added, “[s]o promising a theme has not escaped the notice of novelists, and it has been adopted by Dr. Bird in his spirited story of *Nick of the Woods*” (349).²⁴ Parkman’s endorsement would not have surprised readers familiar with *Oregon Trail*, which he had begun with a Preface that defended his own depiction of the Indian. “The journey which the following narrative describes,” he wrote:

was undertaken on the writer’s part with a view of studying the manners and character of Indians in their primitive state [. . .] In justifying his claim to accuracy on this point, it is hardly necessary to advert to the representations given by poets and novelists, which, for the most part, are mere creations of fancy. The Indian is certainly entitled to a high rank among savages, but his good qualities are not those of an Uncas or an Outalissi (33).

As Bird would in 1853, Parkman used his Preface to preemptively dismiss readers’ confusion between anti-Indian bias and his self-proclaimed unflinching objectivity. He aggressively distanced his work from the literary corpus wrought by romantic mythmakers for whom Cooper, as he almost always seemed to be, was the default stand-in. But significantly, the Prefaces of *Oregon Trail* and *Nick of the Woods* both reflect apprehension of a need to justify, to their white antebellum American readership, the

anti-Indian sensibilities—indeed the white racial triumphalism—in which their narratives were invested.

In his review of *Oregon Trail*, Melville gave eloquent expression to a counter-imperial impulse that authors such as Parkman and Bird sought to suppress in their writings. Resting his argument on the presumption of a shared humanity that transcends racial and cultural divides, Melville closed out his critique with one of the most arresting prose passages he ever produced:

We are all of us—Anglo-Saxons, Dyaks, and Indians—sprung from one head and made in one image. And if we reject this brotherhood now, we shall be forced to join hands hereafter.—A misfortune is not a fault; and good luck is not meritorious. The savage is born a savage; and the civilized being but inherits his civilization, nothing more. Let us not disdain then, but pity. And wherever we recognize the image of God let us reverence it; though it swing from the gallows. (231-232)

Here Melville distilled the essence of an antebellum counter-imperial impulse that, however overridden by the era's Anglo-triumphalist politicians, newspaper editors, and authors, nevertheless stubbornly persisted on the margins of the nation's popular and political discourse. Indeed, asserting that all human beings reflected "the image of God" and therefore mandated basic respect, Melville hearkened back to the opening lines of

the Declaration of Independence, and articulated the terms on which so many over the decades had spoken out against territorial aggrandizement, slavery, and Indian Removal.

***Moby-Dick* and the Hunt**

In *Frontier*, Edwin Fussell observed of *Moby-Dick* that “Melville’s most inclusive intention is constantly to insinuate some sort of sly connection between Ahab’s business with the White Whale and America’s business with the Far West” (261). In the decades following Fussell’s study, numerous critics have identified ways in which *Moby-Dick* engages rhetorics of Manifest Destiny.²⁵ Significantly less explored by critics of the novel, however, has been the extent to which Melville shaped that engagement by appropriating the nation’s popular frontier literatures—a comparative gap that is somewhat surprising considering *Moby-Dick*’s close chronological proximity to “Mr. Parkman’s Tour,” and especially given the novel’s myriad structural and thematic resonances with the frontier writing genre.

Like *Oregon Trail* and so many other fiction and nonfiction treatments of the American West, Melville’s signature novel turns on the story of a lettered and urbane Easterner who, wanting respite from the sedentary life, turns to the open frontier in search of rejuvenation, danger, and play. Ishmael’s early-chapter depictions of the scene at New Bedford and Nantucket, the “wild set of mariners enough” (16) that he encounters at these sites, and the motley cast with whom he finally throws in aboard the *Pequod*, all recalled familiar celebrations of the western cities as points of confluence between civilization and the untamed.²⁶ Further, Melville built into *Moby-Dick* an

“almost continuous” stream of Western references and images that, “[w]ithout adequate explanation of their presence in such profusion [. . .] may well strike an honest and sensitive reader as gratuitous, puzzling, or even indecorous” (Fussell 258-259).²⁷

Beyond these important structural resonances, however, any effort at an “adequate explanation” for *Moby-Dick*’s play with the American West must also take into account the novel’s deeply conflicted immersion in the psychology and practice of hunting. As I hope to show in the section that follows, in his treatment of whaling Melville dramatized the antebellum clash between triumphalism and counter-imperial sensibility.

But before examining the ideological ambivalence pervading *Moby-Dick*’s portrayal of whaling, it bears noting the broad crossover element that the hunting motif afforded, between nineteenth-century literatures of the West and contemporaneous literatures of the sea. Both genres reinforced the Anglo-American hunter’s association with “the conventional American myth of successful self reliance on the frontier” even as this figure’s outlandish experiences paid homage to “the uncontrollable mystery of the natural world” and left him, “ironically, the helpless prey in the chase” (Estes 26). As David S. Reynolds wrote in *Beneath the American Renaissance*, from the late 1830s forward there emerged an increasing literary obsession with “mythic sea monsters,” and especially “[s]pectacular whale chases, punctuated with salty seaman’s slang”; by the time Melville began *Moby-Dick*, the “nautical adventure” genre had given rise to “a wild one-upsmanship among popular adventure writers competing against each other to see who could describe the most freakish savage beast” (195-196).²⁸ During the same period, moreover, “[t]all tales of the West had overspread the entire country,” and both

in terms of action and theme, Melville's novel operated in conversation with such exaggerated frontier hunting literatures as Thorpe's "Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841), which described the "comic adventures of a backwoodsman who sought a fabulously large bear [. . .] in revenge for depredations" (Rourke 154-155).

A telling index of these genres' common and fundamentally conflicted engagement with antebellum-era conquest ideologies was the nominal hero of *The Crockett Almanac*, a Nashville-based periodical which ran irregularly between 1835 and 1855. In the *Almanac*, Davy Crockett could be found in pitched battle with krakens and whales in a turbulent ocean, or alternatively, contending with dangerous landscapes and creatures on the western frontier (Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* 196). The myth that grew around Crockett following his death at the Alamo in 1836, in the *Almanac* and in the spate of romantic biographies devoted to him, consistently emphasized his ideological ambivalence towards Jacksonian expansionism. As Constance Rourke noted in her 1931 study *American Humor*:

Crockett first emerged as a coonskin follower of Jackson, he later became Jackson's opponent, and was transformed into an oracle throughout the land, with a position similar to Jack Downing [. . .] Crockett's philosophy was simple: he wanted to save the land from the speculator [. . .] For the most part Crockett was a wanderer, moving westward, to Texas, across the plains, to California, to Japan—for pearls—and to the South Seas.
(55)

Though famously contemptuous of white civilization's mercantilization of the natural world, Crockett, like his contemporary and fellow frontier legend Daniel Boone, functioned as a vanguard enabler of the processes he deplored.²⁹

This fundamental paradox similarly informed Melville's characterization of Ahab in *Moby-Dick*. In the famous "Quarter-Deck" chapter, when Ahab rallies the *Pequod* crew to his vengeful cause, only Starbuck objects, and although he reads blasphemy into Ahab's desire for "[v]engeance of a dumb brute!", he begins his counterargument on economic grounds. "How many barrels," he asks, "will thy vengeance yield even if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market." Striking his heart, the captain of an industrial whaling ship declares: "Nantucket market! Hoot! But come closer, Starbuck; thou requirest a little lower layer. If money's to be the measurer, man, and the accountants have computed their great counting-house the globe, by girdling it with guineas, one to every three parts of an inch; then, let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium *here!*" (178). Towards the end of the novel, Ahab again disparages Starbuck's allegiance to "accountants" who would economize the "globe." Requesting that they pause to repair leaks in the *Pequod*'s oil-filled caskets, the first mate cites their bottom-line responsibility to the ship's Nantucket owners. As though channeling Crockett's exasperation with land speculators, Ahab fires back: "Owners, owners? Thou art always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners, as if the owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander; and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel.—On deck!" (516).

But of course, if Ahab scorns the profit motive, he nevertheless shows a perfect willingness to exploit others' adherence to it. His masterful demagoguery in the "Quarter-Deck" chapter, after all, has at its bottom the promise of money:

"[. . .] look ye, whosoever of ye raises me that same white whale,
he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!"

"Huzza! huzza!" cried the seamen, as with swinging tarpaulins
they hailed the act of nailing the gold to the mast. (176)

And along the same lines, at the beginning of "Ahab and Starbuck in the Cabin," Starbuck finds the captain "girdling" the globe with maps; in his efforts to track the white whale; bent over "a general chart of the oriental archipelagoes [. . .] and another separate one representing the long eastern coasts of the Japanese islands" (516), Ahab comes across less as an ascetic-minded frontiersman than as a calculating speculator. Not only does he stand on his economically-sanctioned title as the ship's "commander" to rebuff Starbuck's request, but when he suddenly reverses his position and orders the Burtons hoisted, Melville writes: "It may have been a flash of honesty in him; or mere prudential policy which, under the circumstances, imperiously forbade the slightest symptom of open disaffection, however transient, in the important chief officer of his ship" (518). While Ahab holds his own private agenda over and above that of the interests he serves, he continues to fulfill his official duties until the novel's final scenes.³⁰

With his disparagements of a civilizational enterprise in which his own activities are inescapably implicated, the *Pequod* captain reflects the paradoxical frontier ethos popularized by James Fenimore Cooper, and in this context it is worth noting that American literatures of the sea, like those of the western frontier, originated in their fullest cultural force with the writings of Cooper. As Nathaniel Philbrick has observed, *The Pilot* “initiated the genre of American sea fiction in 1824,” and retained much of the iconography Cooper was developing in his Leatherstocking cycle: *The Pilot*’s “most memorable character, Long Tom Coffin, is a Nantucketer, a gigantic and grizzled old salt made of the same mythic stuff as Natty Bumpo [. . .] Instead of a rifle, Coffin carries a harpoon everywhere he goes, on land as well as sea” (438). Whether conducted through the metonym of the rifle or that of the lance/harpoon, following Cooper’s rise to celebrity during the 1820s, a constellation of nineteenth-century authors traded in direct correlations between hunting on the frontier and territorial conquest. *Moby-Dick* liberally appropriated these associations as well—but in contrast to Cooper and the majority of frontier writers who came after him, Melville did not relegate counter-imperial sensibility to the margins of his narrative. Rather, his treatment of the hunting motif foregrounded an irresolvable interpretive conflict over the meaning and consequences of American expansionism.

In the first chapter of the novel, Melville established an ambivalent interconnection between Ishmael’s enthusiasm for whaling and rhetorics of Manifest Destiny. As if directly referencing O’Sullivan’s famous 1845 declaration that “[t]he American claim is by right of our manifest destiny to overspread and possess the whole

of the continent which Providence has given us" (quoted in White 73), Ishmael tells readers: "And, doubtless, my going on this whaling voyage, formed part of the grand programme of Providence that was drawn up a long time ago." The "programme" Ishmael imagines frames his adventure to come as the stuff of dramatic headlines, situated between "*Grand Contested Election for the Presidency of the United States*" and "BLOODY BATTLE IN AFFGHANISTAN" (7). If a retrospective Ishmael here pokes fun at the grandiose scale of his initial expectations, he nevertheless does so in terms that locate his hunting adventure within an ideologically divisive and intensely violent political context.³¹

Ishmael's early celebrations of Nantucket Island similarly inscribe hunting as a figuration for territorial conquest in general, and American expansionism in particular. During the second chapter of the novel, he asks: "Where else but from Nantucket did those aboriginal whalers, the Red Men, first sally out in canoes and give chase to the Leviathan?" (9). Shortly thereafter in the "Nantucket" chapter, he again lionizes the Indians' settlement at an island from which they had long been eradicated by white colonists (69). Conspicuously omitting the circumstances of the Indians' disappearance from Nantucket,³² Melville's narrator glorifies the island's whaling history:

And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea hermits, issuing from their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like so many Alexanders; parceling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, as the three pirate powers did Poland. Let America add

Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm all India, and hang out their blazing banner from the sun; two thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's. For the sea is his; he owns it, as Emperors own Empires; other seamen have but a right of way through it. (70)

Stylistically, Ishmael's rhetorical treatment of the Nantucket whalers appears to reflect antebellum pro-expansionist argumentation at its most rhapsodic. Yet, by locating the United States' conflict with Mexico (as well as its potential designs on Cuba and Canada) within an international mosaic of racial cruelty and political violence, Melville implicitly denies the appeals to innocence and exceptionalism scaffolding the United States' self-narrated frontier experience. By the same token, in its treatment of American expansion as merely another chapter in an endless story of territorial ambition, the passage exposes the instability of nineteenth-century arguments that the nation's republican institutions set it diametrically at odds with imperialism—a much loathed concept to be associated with Europe in general, and Great Britain in particular.

It is with equally ironic effect that Ishmael, in the first “Knights and Squires” chapter, offers up the *Pequod*'s³³ fated crew as a glorious emblem of American republicanism. Defending his epic presentation of “meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways,” he invokes the “great Democratic god! [. . .] who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all Thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy

selectist champions from thy kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God!” (127).³⁴ For all his straightforward ventriloquization of American triumphalism, Ishmael’s retrospective position casts his sensibilities in a problematic light; if the *Pequod*’s hunters are to be taken as a representation of Jacksonian republicanism, the destructive path on which these hunters are bound resonates with the frequently-expressed antebellum conviction that neither America’s institutions nor the spirit of its people were built to withstand the repercussions of empire-building.

Perhaps *Moby-Dick*’s most provocatively-drawn analogy between hunting and American expansionism, however, occurs in “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish.” In this brief chapter, which follows closely after the great hunting scene, the “Grand Armada,” Ishmael lays out “the laws and regulations of the whale fishery,” by which whalers’ disputes over quarry are settled. The rules are simple: “I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it,” and “II. A Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it” (432-433). As happens so often throughout the novel, over the course of his discussion Ishmael induces provocative political lessons:

What are the sinews and souls of Russian serfs and Republican slaves but Fast-Fish whereof possession is the whole of the law? What to the rapacious landlord is the widow’s last mite but a Fast-Fish? [. . .] What are the Duke of Dunder’s hereditary towns and hamlets but Fast-Fish? What to that redoubted harpooner, John Bull, is poor Ireland, but a Fast-Fish? What to that apostolic lancer, Brother Jonathan, is Texas but a

Fast-Fish? And concerning all these, is not Possession the whole of the law? (434-435)

Breaking down the fishery laws into their most basic components, Ishmael exposes the anxieties which rhetorics of American exceptionalism perpetually sought to attenuate. As Frederick Merk wrote in 1963: “A free, confederated, self-governed republic on a continental scale—this was Manifest Destiny [. . .] Republicanism by definition meant freedom [. . .] It meant more. It was government of a classless society, as contrasted with that in a monarchy, which was dominated by an arrogant aristocracy and headed by a hereditary king” (29). In contrast to the spread-eagle patriotic worldview Merk describes, Ishmael’s conflation of capitalist landlords with European aristocrats, as well as his use of the term “Republican slaves,” echoed the scathing social criticisms that mid-century abolitionists and radical reformers were injecting into the popular discourse; similarly, by tethering Texas’s annexation to British imperialism, Melville’s narrator again undermines a key distinction on which expansionists’ relied to counteract their critics in the public square.³⁵

With his subsequent reflections on “Loose-Fish”, Ishmael completes the chapter’s unflinching exposure of the persistent doubt troubling nineteenth-century associations between Manifest Destiny and republican idealism: “What was Poland to the Czar?”, he asks. “What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose-Fish.” After once again treating the United States’ conflict with Mexico as standard imperialist fare, Ishmael wonders aloud:

What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but Loose-Fish? What are men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is the principle of religious belief in them but Loose-Fish? What to the ostentatiously smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too? (435)

Principles of republican governance and independent thought—far from embodied by the United States—are here likened to contested quarry which many entities might claim for their own, but none can ultimately attain. In stark contrast to his patriotic outburst in “Knights and Squires”, Ishmael in “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish” tends towards an alignment with the gathering cacophony of skeptics who by mid-century were decrying the United States as yet another failed experiment in human liberty.³⁶

But for all the ambivalence betrayed by his discussions of whaling, Ishmael's own sustained enthusiasm for the hunt constitutes an exemplary performance of the Big Talk that freighted antebellum America's literary frontier. To a degree exceeding even the double-dealing rhetorics offered by Cooper's Judge Temple and by Parkman's constructed persona in *Oregon Trail*, Melville's narrator perpetually ventilates ideological anxiety over what he is doing, yet just as consistently prevents that anxiety from attaining imaginative primacy. Melville explicitly highlights this dialogic interplay in “The Advocate,” wherein Ishmael raises and smoothly rebuts a number of objections to “this business of whaling.” If whalers are “butchers,” he reminds readers, they are no

more so than “all Martial Commanders whom the world invariably delights to honor.” And to the extent that the whale hunter’s trade renders him unfit for metropolitan company, then the same must be said of the soldier who returns “from unspeakable carrion [. . .] to drink in all ladies plaudits.” Meeting the “interlinked terrors and wonders” of the whale hunt, Ishmael argues, requires greater bravery than the battlefield, and indeed many of the world’s greatest military and economic conquests were made possible by whalers “ferreting out the remotest and least known parts of the earth.” With equal alacrity, Ishmael lays out whaling’s grand associations with republicanism and with colonial power. It was “the whalemen,” he contends, “who last eventuated the liberation of Peru, Chili, and Bolivia from the yoke of Old Spain, and the establishment of the eternal democracy in those parts”; shortly thereafter, he asserts that whalemen have “better than royal blood” in their veins, and boasts: “Whaling is imperial! By old English statutory law, the whale is declared a ‘royal fish.’” (118-121).

It is with a similarly big-talking approach that Ishmael, much later in *Moby-Dick* and in the wake of numerous ultra-violent hunting scenes, devotes a chapter to extant associations of the whaling industry with reckless depletionism, and speculates as to “whether the Leviathan can long endure so wide a chase, and so remorseless a havoc; whether he must at last be exterminated from the waters, and the last whale, like the last man, smoke his last pipe, and then himself evaporate in the puff” (501). Defending his fellow whale-hunters by emphasizing the inconsequentiality of their impact on the species they pursue, for the sake of perspective Ishmael invites readers to consider the notorious wholesale slaughters of buffalo occurring in the American West. Though he

attempts to cast the buffalo crisis as the product of a bygone era, his analogy is rife with mid-century anxieties over expansion's impact on the natural landscape and its creatures. In *Letters*, for example, Catlin had railed against the whites' mass commercialization of buffalo hides, writing: "'Oh insatiable man, is thy avarice such! wouldst thou tear the skin from the back of the last animal of this noble race, and *rob thy fellow-man of his meat, and for it give him back poison!*'" (quoted in Limerick 182). And of course, Catlin's protestation reflected an anxiety that would remain relevant well past the publication of *Moby-Dick*, for as Limerick observes: "[b]esieged by hide hunters in the 1870s and 1880s, the buffalo came close to disappearing" (314). Yet by closing out the chapter in confident testimony to the whale's ineradicable presence on the earth, Ishmael locates the "extinction" argument at the margins of his narrative, and underwrites expansionists' association of the frontier with an inexhaustible fecundity.

While Ishmael's abstract ruminations on whaling poignantly hit upon extant ambivalence towards antebellum-era conquest ideologies, the actual whaling scenes in which Melville places him dramatize that ambivalence in ways that reflect the author's broader thematic engagement with contemporary frontier writing. That Melville had been especially impressed with Parkman's depiction of the buffalo hunt was evinced in "Mr. Parkman's Tour," which not only praised *Oregon Trail* on that score, but also excerpted Parkman's most protracted hunting scene. Yet, before articles by Jack Scherting and Thomas Altherr appeared in 1987 and 1990 respectively, the lone detailed acknowledgment of Parkman's influence on *Moby-Dick* belonged to Fussell, and as Altherr rightly observes, "even Fussell's fine treatment did not explore fully the

influence Parkman's account had on Melville" (1). Scherting and Altherr point up numerous commonalities in the descriptive language of Parkman's prairie/buffalo, and Melville's ocean/whale; and among *Oregon Trail*'s personae, these critics also identify models for Melville's fictional characters.³⁷

The more provocative of the two critical arguments is Altherr's, which takes issue with Fussell's footnoted claim that "[o]n a very superficial level, *Moby-Dick* is a point-by-point refutation of practically everything in Parkman" (260). Elaborating on his contrary position that "Melville agreed rather than argued with Parkman's notions about savagery in the American West" (4), Altherr writes:

Men carried on eternal warfare against what they consider subordinate creatures of Nature by means of the hunt. For both books, the activity of hunting provided the structure and the dynamic [. . .] Although the prime reason for the hunt differed in each book—Parkman hunted for sport mainly, occasionally for meat, whereas the *Pequod* killed for commerce and eventually hunted one whale grimly—the spirit, the psychology, and often the process were the same. The hunters in both books sought a consummatory kill in a relentlessly harsh manner, a rape of the resources of Nature. (8-9)

Both on the primary level of Melville's plot and in terms of his thematic engagement with antebellum-era conquest ideologies, Altherr's emphasis on hunting's centrality to

Moby-Dick is certainly well-founded.³⁸ But in staking out *Oregon Trail* and *Moby-Dick* as unambiguously aligned in their “notions about savagery in the American West,” Altherr, like Fussell before him, elides the deep ambivalence with which Melville’s novel appropriated the antebellum literary hunt. Throughout, *Moby-Dick*’s hunting scenes simultaneously pay tribute to and harshly critique the violent taste for conquest at the center of the antebellum United States’ expansionist enterprise.

In drawing attention to the ideologically conflicted nature Melville’s hunt, I want to begin in reference to “The First Lowering” and “The Grand Armada,” the two chapters that most immediately suggest *Oregon Trail*’s structural and thematic influence on *Moby-Dick*. In his review of *Oregon Trail*, Melville had selected the better part of a late chapter entitled “The Chase,” in which Parkman and his companions assail an enormous herd of buffalo, and the scene reaches its crisis point with Parkman totally hemmed in by a stampede:

In a moment I was in the midst of a cloud, half suffocated by the dust and stunned by the trampling of the flying herd; but I was drunk with the chase and cared for nothing but the buffalo [. . .] Suddenly, to my utter amazement, the hoofs were jerked upward, the tails flourished in the air, and amid a cloud of dust the buffalo seemed to sink into the earth before me [. . .] We had run unawares upon a ravine [. . .] It was impossible to stop; I would have done so gladly if I could; so, half sliding, half plunging, down went the little mare [. . .] I was pitched forward violently

against her neck and nearly thrown over her head among the buffalo, who among dust and confusion came tumbling in all around. (410)

In developing the climax of “The First Lowering,” Melville replicated the action and spirit, and even partook of the actual language, of Parkman’s passage. When Starbuck and his crew find themselves overwhelmed by the combined effect of a thrashing whale and a suddenly-emergent ocean squall, Ishmael tells readers:

Then all in one welded commotion came an invisible push from astern, whole forward the boat seemed striking on a ledge; the sail collapsed and exploded; a gush of scalding vapor shot up near by; something rolled and tumbled like an earthquake beneath us. The whole crew were half suffocated as they were tossed helter-skelter into the white curdling cream of the squall. Squall, whale, and harpoon all blended together; and the whale, merely grazed by the iron, escaped. (244)

Between these two descriptive passages, parallels abound—not only in terms of horse/boat, ocean squall/dust storm, but more importantly in the way that both writers obliterate, through the delirium of the hunt, perceived boundaries between man, animal, and natural terrain. And indeed, much like Parkman’s treatment of running buffalo in “The Chase” and throughout *Oregon Trail*, “The First Lowering” in many ways functions as indoctrination into the epic quality of the hunt.

One of the most important effects of “The First Lowering” is that it puts on display the *Pequod* officers’ ability to inspire in the heat of battle. Stubb’s exhortations to his crew—“Hurrah for the gold cup of sperm oil, my heroes! [. . .] pull, can’t ye? pull, won’t ye?” (237)—or in Ishmael’s words, his method of “inculcating the religion of rowing” (238)—showcase the second mate at his rhetorical best. Flask’s exclamations, meanwhile, similarly elevate the tenor of the scene: ““Sing out and say something, my hearties. Roar and pull, my thunderbolts. Beach me, beach me on their black backs, boys [. . .] O Lord, Lord! but I shall go stark, staring mad! See! see that white water!”” (242). And, perhaps no moment in the novel reflects so flatteringly on Starbuck’s leadership ability than when he and his crew stand on the brink of destruction: ““Give way, men,” whispered Starbuck, drawing still further aft the sheet of his sail; ‘there is time to kill a fish yet before the squall comes’” (244). For all its exhilarating action and rousing discourse, however, “The First Lowering” simultaneously sustains a counter-narrative that sets it quite apart from the near-monolithic triumphalism of Parkman’s buffalo hunt.

The springboard for the scene is not the sounding of a whale, but rather than the sudden appearance at the end of the previous chapter of Ahab’s secret attendants—a happening that throws the *Pequod*’s crew into a state of confused anxiety. Over the course of the chapter it becomes apparent to all that these “five dusky phantoms” (235) are “stowaways” (237) whose sole purpose is to facilitate Ahab’s doctrinal pursuit the white whale. In effect, the Parsees’ surprise arrival during the novel’s transition into “The First Lowering” casts a pall over the scene that the hunters themselves cannot but

acknowledge. Stubb instructs his rowers to ignore “[t]hose chaps in yonder boat” but, apparently powerless to follow this edict himself, instead goes on to associate them with “brimstone,” call them “devils” (237), and finally accost Starbuck on the subject as their boats draw near. Starbuck replies by accusing Ahab of playing the *Pequod* crew falsely: ““Smuggled on board, somehow, before the ship sailed [. . .] A sad business, Mr. Stubb!”” As Stubb had done before him, Starbuck attempts to relegate the importance of Ahab’s new allies to the margins of the action: “but never mind, Mr. Stubb, all for the best. Let all your crew pull strong, come what will.” Yet left to his own thoughts, Stubb remarks: ““Aye, aye, I thought as much [. . .] They were hidden down there. The White Whale’s at the bottom of it. Well, well, so be it! Can’t be helped! All right! Give way, men! It ain’t the White Whale to-day! Give way!”” (239).

The voice most responsible for drawing down the adrenaline of “The First Lowering,” however, belongs to Ishmael, who opens the chapter with an ominous and racially-charged description of the stowaways. Fedallah’s henchmen, he tells readers, “were of that vivid, tiger-yellow complexion peculiar to some of the aboriginal natives of the Manillas; —a race notorious for a certain diabolism of subtilty, and by some honest white mariners supposed to be the paid spies and secret confidential agents on the water of the devil, their lord, whose counting-room they suppose to be elsewhere” (236). Deeper into the chapter, moreover, having alternately listened in upon each of the *Pequod*’s mates, Ishmael declines to provide the same service with respect to captain Ahab, whose utterances he considers “best omitted here; for you live under the blessed light of the evangelical land. Only the infidel sharks in the audacious seas may give ear

to such words, when, with tornado brow, and eyes of red murder, and foam-glued lips, Ahab leaped after his prey” (243).

Altherr presents “The First Lowering” as decisive evidence of his claim that while “modern anti-hunters might find such passions suspect and barbaric [. . .] both nineteenth-century authors quickened their prose to the hunter’s pulse [. . .] Parkman’s *Oregon Trail* and Melville’s *Moby-Dick* documented the savage urge to hunt in mid nineteenth-century America” (11-12). But Altherr leaves out of his discussion the importance to *Moby-Dick*’s first hunting scene of the “outlandish strangers” (239) it introduces. Because of Ahab and his denizens, Ishmael and the *Pequod* officers’ heat-of-the-moment discourse is persistently disrupted by darker references to treachery, devils, blasphemy, and murder—one important effect of which is to instill an enervating, distracting element into a scene otherwise endowed and peopled with the trappings of frontier conquest. The newcomers’ presence raises damning questions—not only about their own purpose and antecedents, but more importantly about Ahab and, by extension, about the nature of the hunt in which all are participating.

Parkman’s buffalo hunting scene appears to have been the object of a similarly conflicted appropriation in “The Grand Armada.” To begin with, the soundings that trigger the action in Parkman’s chapter and in “The Grand Armada” are almost identically executed: while Parkman and his compatriots are alerted to the presence of buffalo by the familiar “gladdening cry” (406), the hunters aboard the *Pequod* are set into action by what Ishmael calls the “customary cheering cry” (417). On the verge of giving chase, Parkman notes, “we had scarcely gone a mile when an imposing spectacle

presented itself" (408); similarly positioned, Ishmael tells readers that "ere long a spectacle of singular magnificence saluted itself" (417). In each instance, the "spectacle" in question is a massive herd of the hunters' respective quarries, and shortly into each scene the narrators find themselves surrounded by the animals they pursue. Parkman claims, "I was so close I could have touched them with my gun" (410), and Ishmael recalls that: "Like household dogs they came snuffling round us, right up to our gunwales, and touching them; till it almost seemed that some spell had suddenly domesticated them. Queequeg patted their foreheads; Starbuck scratched their backs with his lance; but fearful of the consequences, for the time refrained from darting it" (423).

The paradoxical effect of this last memorable detail, however—with Starbuck using a lethal weapon as an instrument of affection towards the very game he seeks—indexes the chapter's conflicted attitude regarding "the savage urge to hunt in mid nineteenth-century America." On the one hand, Ishmael's language serves as a reminder that despite their momentary gestures of tenderness, Queequeg and Starbuck have in no way wavered in their violent intent towards the animals surrounding them. And just as for Parkman the sight of a prairie "alive with thousands of buffalo, bulls, cows and calves" provides a segue into Shaw's declaration: "'Tongues and hump-ribs tomorrow'" (407), the *Pequod's* encounter with the whale herd leads Ishmael to remark, "sperm whales are not every day encountered; while you may, then, you must kill all you can" (422). But at the same time, Starbuck's benign interplay with the calves contributes to

the chapter's sustained solicitation of readerly identification with the animals that he and his compatriots are commissioned to kill.

As occurs so often over the course of *Moby-Dick*, "The Grand Armada" presents the whale in conspicuously anthropomorphic terms. When the animals are first sighted, Ishmael tells readers that they "embrac[ed] so great a multitude, that it would almost seem as if numerous nations of them had sworn solemn league and covenant for mutual assistance and protection" (417). Shortly thereafter, he likens the herd to "marching armies approaching an unfriendly defile in the mountains [. . .] all eagerness to place that perilous passage in their rear" (418). And explaining why the *Pequod* hunters remain hopeful in the face of this dangerous force, Ishmael reflects:

Though banding together in tens of thousands, the lion-maned buffaloes of the West have fled before a solitary horseman. Witness, too, all human beings, how when herded together in the sheepfold of a theater's pit, they will, at the slightest alarm of fire, rush helter-skelter for the outlets, crowding, trampling, jamming, and remorselessly dashing each other to death. Best, therefore, withhold any amazement at the strangely gallied whales before us, for there is no folly of the beasts of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men. (420)

This vision of buffaloes', whales' and humans' shared vulnerability to panicked self-destruction comes full circle when a fleeing whale drags a cutting spade into their midst.

“So that tormented to madness,” states Ishmael, “he was now churning through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and tossing the keen spade around him, wounding and murdering his own comrades” (425). Especially as a continuation of the “theater’s pit” metaphor, this horrific turn of events towards the end of “The Grand Armada” actively invites readers to view the whales less as quarry than as objects of sympathetic identification. By thus presenting the brutal action of hunting with such emphasis on the hunted animal’s victimized perspective, “The Grand Armada” reflects Melville’s intimate commiseration with counter-imperial impulses.³⁹

Along these same lines, Ishmael’s famous description of the “enchanted calm” (422) at the center of the whale herd contravenes the mainline triumphalism typifying nineteenth-century literary representations of the hunt. Not only do the whalers playfully interact with the cows and calves on the surface of the water—to which animals Ishmael significantly refers as “the women and children of this routed host”—but they also watch the cows nurse their young in the “watery vaults” below them: “and as human infants while suckling will calmly and fixedly gaze away from the breast, as if leading two different lives at the same time; and while yet drawing mortal nourishment, be still spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence;—even so did the young of these whales seem looking up towards us” (423). In one of *Moby-Dick*’s more rhetorically jarring moments, Ishmael soon shifts from recalling the disarming peacefulness of the nursing scene to framing whale milk as a coveted object of conquest: “When by chance these precious parts in a nursing whale are cut by the hunter’s lance, the mother’s pouring milk and blood rivallingly discolor the sea for rods. The milk is

very sweet and rich; it has been tasted by man; it might do well with strawberries” (424). Significantly, however, Ishmael’s remark is relegated to the status of a rare textual footnote, and indeed—especially given the whales’ explicit personification in this moment—the juxtaposition of mother’s milk against shed blood hardly comes across as an instance of Melville “quicken[ing] [his] prose to the hunter’s pulse.”⁴⁰

If in his reflective moments Ishmael harbors scant credulity at the prospect of the whales’ extinction, in the novel’s various hunting scenes he takes somewhat more seriously hunting’s associations with moral transgressiveness. In “The *Pequod* meets the *Virgin*,” for example, the *Pequod*’s three boats converge on a blind and sickly whale, whose wounds have rendered him “a terrific, most pitiable, and most maddening sight” (388). As the boats get within striking distance, Ishmael states that while the whale “horribly pitiable to see [. . .] pity there was none. For all his old age, and his one arm, and his blind eyes, he must die the death and be murdered, to light the gay bridals and other merrymakings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all” (391). In two fundamental ways here, through Ishmael Melville ascribes humanity to a hunted animal. First, his slap at the domestic beneficiaries of frontier conquest, and at the hypocrisies of the church, recapitulate Tommo’s critiques of the whites’ exploitative treatment of ‘savages’ in *Typee*. Second, as in both “The First Lowering” and “The Grand Armada,” Melville has Ishmael evoke the concept of murder in relation to hunting. Yet Ishmael’s expressed misgivings over the moral ramifications of their deed do not close out this scene, in which cruelty for its own sake has an important part to play:

Still rolling in his blood, at last he partially disclosed a strangely discolored bunch of protuberance, the size of a bushel, low down on the flank”:

“A nice spot,” cried Flask; “just let me prick him there once.”

“Avast!” cried Starbuck, “there’s no need of that!”

But humane Starbuck was too late. (391)

Though perhaps standing out as a uniquely sadistic moment even by the standards of *Moby-Dick*’s hunting scenes, Flask’s impulsive action here is hardly alien to the thoroughly bloody business of the *Pequod*.

In “Stubb Kills A Whale,” Melville similarly “humanizes” a whale as the crew prepares to lower their boats in pursuit: “lazily undulating in the trough of the sea, and ever and anon tranquilly spouting his vapory jet, the whale looked like a portly burgher smoking his pipe of a warm afternoon. But that pipe, poor whale, was thy last” (308). In the spectacle that follows the designation “poor whale” proves an understatement:

The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood, which bubbled and seethed for furlongs behind in their wake [. . .] Stubb straightened it again and again, by a few rapid blows against the gunwale, then again and again sent it into the whale [. . .] abating in his flurry, the whale once more rolled out into view; surging from side to side; spasmodically

dilating and contracting his spout-hole, with sharp, cracking, agonizing respirations” (311).

Stubb’s sexually charged relentlessness, coupled with the graphic depiction of the whale’s death throes, infuses the scene with a palpable morbidity, the effects of which outlast the completion of the act. Declaring “both pipes smoked out!”, Stubb signals a metaphoric connectedness to the creature he has killed by emptying his own pipe into the ocean; and as the chapter fades out, Ishmael leaves readers with an image of the *Pequod*’s second mate, momentarily depleted and “thoughtfully eyeing the vast corpse he had made” (312).

The sense of emptiness that follows in the wake of Stubb’s efficient butchery, like Ishmael’s frequent outbursts of anthropomorphic sympathy and Starbuck’s protest against Flask’s banal cruelty, significantly limit the degree to which *Moby-Dick* can be read as an epic valorization of the hunt. Indeed, such moments powerfully gesture towards what Lee Rozelle has recently identified as “ecosublimity”—an experience that “can be thought of as the awe and terror that occurs when literary figures experience the infinite complexity and contingency of place. This aesthetic moment prompts responsible engagements with natural spaces, and it recalls crucial links between human subjects and nonhuman world” (1). At no point does Melville allow for full realization of the phenomenon Rozelle describes, as renewed acts of violence against the natural world continually short-circuit the novel’s engagement with counter-imperial discourse. Yet the short-circuiting ultimately works both ways. Especially when considered in light

of the transcendently-destructive climax of the *Pequod* crew's final, three-chapter battle with the white whale, Melville's enlistment of the hunting motif enacts a poignant reflection of expansionism's ideological divisiveness in the antebellum American mind.

Notes

1. John Gerlach discussed Melville's conflicted engagement with the rhetorics of Manifest Destiny in his 1972 essay, "Messianic Nationalism in the Early Works of Herman Melville." Primarily focused on *Redburn* (1849), *Mardis* (1849), and *White Jacket* (1850), Gerlach's essay also cited the outbursts of spread-eagle Americanism in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850) and *Moby-Dick* (1851), to illustrate his argument that "[t]hroughout his career, Melville used messianic nationalism to seek conventional approval, while at the same time having his own private joke about this characteristic American delusion" (25).

2. As Edwin Fussell succinctly observed in *Frontier: American Literature & the American West*: "we must never forget that [Melville's] whole early career (1846-1851) coincided with the most dramatic phase of American expansion, an expansion that in these years carried well beyond the West Coast into what was popularly called the Western Ocean" (261).

3. As I have noted in previous chapters, the idea of the western frontier carried explicitly international connotations in nineteenth-century American discourses. In 1962, Parkman biographer Howard Doughty pointed out that the shared "experience" at the center of *Typee* and *Oregon Trail* "was a familiar one that repeated itself fruitfully during the whole expansionist phase of European culture, as its 'radiation' on a world-wide scale brought it into contact—usually destructive—with cultures of a different nature and induced a more searching scrutiny of its own values" (118). Among those who have emphasized *Typee*'s resonances with antebellum frontier writing are Bernard

DeVoto (*The Year of Decision 1846*, 1942), Edwin Fussell (*Frontier: American Literature & the American West*, 1965), and T. Walter Herbert, *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization*, 1980). More recently, in “Melville’s *Typee*: U.S. Imperialism at Home and Abroad” (1994), John Carlos Rowe demonstrated *Typee*’s immediate engagement with antebellum expansionist doctrine, arguing that Melville’s first book explored the “relationship between the domestic policies of Southern slave-holding and the extra-territorial policies of U.S. colonization” (256).

4. Tommo’s abandonment of the whaling ship in an important sense frames *Typee* as a protest narrative against Anglo-European market economy. The narrator explicitly justifies his act of desertion as a last-ditch response to the *Dolly*’s horrific labor conditions: “the sick had been inhumanly neglected; the provisions had been doled out in scanty allowance; and her cruizes were unreasonably protracted. The captain was the author of these abuses; it was in vain to think that he would either remedy them, or alter his conduct, which was arbitrary and violent in the extreme” (20-21).

5. Also see “‘A Work I Have Never Happened to Meet’: Melville’s Versions of Porter in *Typee*,” in which Bryant argues that Tommo’s manner of departure reflected Melville’s ambivalent sense of his own experience in the Marquesas: “He, too, had been complicit in the conditions of the colonial encounter. He was against imperialism and yet a part of it” (89).

6. Of Mow-Mow, Bryant observes that the “one-eyed chieftain seems to be a character concocted at the last minute in HM’s narrative to provide a fearsome adversary for the soon-to-escape Tommo,” and goes on to provocatively suggest that while

“Tommo’s blow does not kill Mow-Mow [. . .] his intensions surely do not preclude murder; thus Tommo reenacts Cain’s fratricide” (327).

7. Bryant’s Introduction provides a fascinating account of *Typee*’s politically-charged publication history.

8. As we have seen, two years earlier Margaret Fuller in *Summer on the Lakes* had employed a polyvocal, associative writing style to counteract her admitted susceptibility to pervasive fears of rapacious savages violating innocent white women; but Melville’s subversion of this rhetorically potent model was rendered all the more inflammatory by virtue of having reached a broad readership.

9. It is also worth considering the extent to which Melville’s aspersion of white missionaries on a distant frontier was received as a commentary on the United States’ activities in the Oregon territory. The need for missions to reach Indian populations in the far West, and relatedly, the dangers those populations posed to white women pioneers, were primary values to which emigrant boosters and ardent annexationists repeatedly appealed throughout the first half of the century. As Kolodny has noted in *The Land Before Her*, two of the most representative figures of antebellum expansionist propaganda were Narcissa Prentiss Whitman and Eliza Hart Spalding, who with their husbands in 1836 had made a much-celebrated overland trek from New England to establish missions in Oregon. “From the first,” writes Kolodny, both religious periodicals and “groups with an interest in fostering emigration to the Pacific” upheld these women as exemplars, with one New England-based paper proclaiming them ““the first white women who have traversed these mountains,”” and reminding readers: “the

fact that ‘delicate females’ had successfully crossed the continent meant that, in future, whole families might do the same” (230).

10. The backlash was effective enough that Melville released an American edition of *Typee* that purged its most controversial passages. Clearly perturbed by this turn of events, Melville remarked in a late July letter to his friend and editor Evert Duyckink: “The *Revised* (Expurgated?—Odious word!) Edition of *Typee* ought to be duly announced—& as the matter (in one respect) is a little delicate, I am happy that the literary tact of Mr. Duyckink will be exerted on the occasion” (*Melville Log* 224).

11. Melville’s review of *Oregon Trail* is one of several indicators that the United States’ expansionist enterprise was much on his mind during the half-decade separating *Typee* from *Moby-Dick*. Through the summer of 1847, anticipating General Zachary Taylor’s successful presidential run, he ran a series of installments in the *Yankee Doodle* that brutally satirized the frontier war hero’s inflated standing as a model of republican exceptionalism.

12. Throughout the 1840s Bennett, a Southern-sympathizer and hardline expansionist who had been a leading voice of support for the Mexican War, “filled his paper with letters from and about California. ‘Ho! for California was the word” (Merk 48).

13. Limerick relates the case of an emigrant named Bernard Reid, whose initial eagerness to participate in the gold rush rapidly devolved into resentment at the propagandists driving emigration. Reid witnessed a “litany of deaths” along the brutal overland trek to San Francisco, and shortly after arriving there, contracted dysentery—

one of several commonplace diseases bred by the mines' infamously cramped and unsanitary conditions. Finally, after weathering a string of economic failures, Reid wrote in his diary: "'Oh! how bitterly do many curse the day they left home, and swear vengeance upon the whole tribe of editors who deceived them!'" Reid went on to state that he and his fellow workers had been relegated to "the condition of convicts condemned to exile and hard labor" (100-102).

14. Responding to this passage, Michael Paul Rogin has contended that "Melville's reproach to Francis Parkman aspersed his own progenitors, for he was claiming savage ancestry against his family" (*Subversive Genealogies* 42). But such an interpretation ironically perpetuates the mindset Melville was attacking—if Melville's own ancestors ought not to be condemned for their lack of intellectual development, neither should peoples understood to be "savages" in his own time.

15. Irving went on to cite the same "early writers" in his indictment of the English settlers with whom Philip had clashed: "It is painful to perceive, even from these partial narratives, how the footsteps of civilization in this country may be traced in the blood of the original inhabitants; how easily the colonists were moved to hostility by the lust of conquest; how merciless and exterminating was their warfare. The imagination shrinks at the idea, how many intellectual beings were hunted from the earth" (503). While neither of Irving's Indian pieces were included in the first American edition of his *Sketch-Book* (1819-1820), they appeared in the author's revised edition, which appeared less than a year before Melville would review *Oregon Trail* (Manning xxx-xxxi).

16. As Karcher observes:

Although writing before the Indian Removal controversy came to a head, frontier romancers of the 1820s realized that they were participating in a dialogue about the nation's destiny. As a medium for drawing lessons from the past, imagining the future, and forging a nationalist consciousness, they resorted to the historical novel, a genre created by Sir Walter Scott [. . .] By restaging such events as the Pequot War and the French and Indian War and by letting their fictional characters test possibilities that might have arisen had history made them available, these novelists raised vital questions about the ongoing westward drive and its consequences for Indians. ("Introduction" xix)

For an excellent treatment of Scott's structural and thematic influences on American fiction writers from the antebellum period into the mid-twentieth century, see Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (1987).

17. If the extent of Sedgwick's influence on writers associated with the American Renaissance remains underexplored, this critical gap is probably most conspicuous in relation to Melville. Indeed, as Charlene Avallone notes in her 2006 essay "Women Reading Melville/ Melville Reading Women": "Paradigms of American literary history, regional culture, and sentimental/domestic fiction alike have been inadequate to register connections between Melville and his literary neighbor in New York and the Berkshires, Catherine Sedgwick," even though thematic and structural commonalities abound between *Pierre* (1852) and the works of his "sixty-one-year-old

Berkshire neighbor whose romances had helped put American writing on the international literary map and were already being issued as ‘standard’ works definitive of American literature” (52-53). Avallone also notes that in their 1952 edition of *Moby-Dick*, Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent “argue *Hope Leslie* influenced Melville’s naming of the Pequod” (59).

18. As Maddox notes in her discussion, the list of authors attacked for romanticizing Native Americans also included author and prominent cultural critic William Gilmore Simms, an ardent supporter of Indian Removal whose attitudes on the subject were “founded ultimately on the principal of white supremacy” (39).

19. Bird’s impassioned “Indian-hater” also functioned as a depository for extant, counter-imperial impulses. By having Slaughter vociferously cultivate his persona as a pacifist Quaker among men who are themselves self-described Indian fighters, Bird tacitly acknowledges the extreme moral transgressiveness of the violence his book is fully in the business of celebrating. Beyond rendering Nathan Slaughter a perpetual outsider among his fellow countrymen, moreover, the ultimate irreconcilability of his double identity is reflected in the paroxysmal seizures he suffers throughout the novel.

20. In the same Preface, Bird also lengthily denied an unnamed critic’s charges that his novel had disparaged the Quaker faith.

21. Native Americans indigenous to the Pacific West, for example, experienced during this period what Michael Golay has succinctly termed “a cosmic upheaval.” The combined effects of “malnutrition, disease, and prospector violence” reduced the California tribes from numbers in excess of a hundred thousand in 1846 to “a

demoralized remnant of about thirty thousand” over the next ten years. Meanwhile, Indian lands were increasingly decimated by legislation at the territorial, state, and federal levels; Oregon’s Land Donation Law of 1850, for instance, effectively “issued an invitation to settlers to seize Indian lands. The tribes [. . .] were simply informed that the land no longer belonged to them” (*Tide of Empire* 330).

22. See, for example, Alfred E. Cave’s excellent 1999 essay, “Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830.” Cave emphasizes the sense of futility that, by the end of Jackson’s presidency, overtook Indian rights advocates such as Clay, Frelinghuysen, Jeremiah Everts, and Edward Everett. In 1841, notes Cave, then-New York Congressman John Quincy Adams had concluded “it was too late to redress the injustices of the past decade,” and “accordingly declined to chair the House Committee on Indian Affairs, confiding to his diary that ‘the only result would be to keep a perpetual harrow upon my feelings, with a total impotence to render any useful service’” (1352-53).

23. At mid-century, popular authors across a range of genres continued to wrestle with Indian Removal, in large part because of the issue’s inextricability from their effort to establish a distinct cultural identity for the United States. Indeed, white-Indian relations proved an inescapable theme for any American author seeking to chart a coherent national narrative. A case in point is Hawthorne, whose fiction often commented on the contemporary American scene through engagements with the nation’s colonial past; in addition to short stories such as “Roger Malvin’s Burial” (1832, 1846) and “Main Street” (1849), Hawthorne provocatively addressed expansion’s impact on

the Indian in his 1841 collection of children's stories, *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, which Larry Reynolds has brought to light as "a little-studied but most profoundly political work." Explaining American history to an audience of children, the title character, Grandfather, bitterly commented on the English settlers' treatment of the Indian, and "rejected the notion that Indians deserved to be driven from their lands" (*Devils & Rebels* 33-37).

24. Bird's reputation for hard realism with respect to Native Americans endured well into the twentieth century. In his influential *Main Currents of American Thought* (1927), for example, Vernon Parrington wrote: "There is no sentimentalizing of the noble red man in the brisk pages of *Nick of the Woods*; the warriors are dirty drunken louts, filled with an unquenchable blood-lust, whom the frontiersman kills with as little compunction as he would kill a rattlesnake. The ugly feud that so long soiled the Border is depicted with almost startling frankness" (192).

25. Other influential treatments of *Moby-Dick's* interplay with Manifest Destiny include Willie T. Weathers, "*Moby-Dick* and the Nineteenth-Century Scene" (1960); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth* (1973); Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier* (1973); Carolyn L. Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America* (1980): 62-91; Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (1983): 102-151; and Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature & the Politics of Indian Affairs* (1991).

26. In “Mr. Parkman’s Tour,” Melville had called St. Louis “that city of outward-bound caravans for the West, and which is to the prairies, what Cairo is to the Desert” (232). In *Moby-Dick*, New Bedford and Nantucket comes across similarly as gateway sites to the wild whaling grounds. Frontier writings throughout the 1830s and 1840s frequently began with vividly-detailed accounts of raucous jumping-off points to the far West, such as New Orleans, Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis; the intensely heterogeneous, international composition of these fast-growing cities was a point of constant emphasis, and often upheld as a testimony to the United States’ burgeoning economic might as well as its democratic spirit.

27. Fussell went on to declare: “in *Moby-Dick* there are more references to the American West than to Polynesia (or England; or the ancient world or the Near East; or the history of philosophy; or anything else); and all these references appear to head in one direction, as if arranging themselves along lines of force in a pre-existing magnetic field” (259).

28. As noted in my Introduction, this dissertation overall owes much in its conception to *Beneath the American Renaissance* (1988), which brilliantly explores the cultural embeddedness of the authors F. O. Matthiessen identified with the “American Renaissance.”

29. Parrington observes that Crockett’s celebrity was, from the first, “frankly partisan” in design, with a “new Whig party” aggressively promoting his break with Jackson in an effort to displace the Democrats’ politically lucrative association with the “backwoods” (173-176). Parrington, moreover, made much of distinctions between the

“real Davy” and his mythic simulacrum, pointing out that the former was “very far from romantic,” had “the lust of killing [. . .] in his blood,” and ultimately was no different from “the thousands who were wasting the resources of the Indian Empire, destroying forests, skinning the land, slaughtering the deer and bear, the swarms of pigeons, the vast buffalo herds” (178-179). Citing this passage, Slotkin argued “it is this reality which the fiction of the Deerslayer (who only kills at need) served to conceal, when writers like [Timothy] Flint chose to wrap the western hunter in the mantle of Daniel Boone” (*Regeneration Through Violence* 555).

But the literature surrounding Crockett, like the writings of Filson and Flint—from whom Melville liberally drew in his own fiction (Bercaw 82)—appeared, as we have seen, during an era of heightened public awareness of the moral dilemmas posed by westward expansion. Rather than vehicles for deception, then, such works were reflective of a broad, complicated effort to justify expansion by romanticizing it.

30. As Larry Reynolds has written in a different context in *European Revolutions* (1988), a number of influential Melville critics, including Rogin, have read Ahab as an allegorical representative of antebellum American cultural, economic, and/or political hegemony (109).

31. Weathers made a similar point, noting: “In this ‘programme’ [Ishmael’s] prophetic vision stands between the 1848 presidential election and its predicted harvest of bloody strife” (486). In *Shadow Over the Promised Land*, Karcher reads Ishmael’s journalistic vision as a direct indictment of antebellum American registers of white racial triumphalism: “Melville hints that the whaling voyage on which Ishmael has set out [. .

.] symbolizes the apocalyptic judgment that threaten America for her continued enslavement of the Negro” (77). In “*Moby-Dick* and the War on Terror,” Karcher reanimates her political reading of this scene in the context of the United States’ response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. “Like Ishmael in 1841,” she writes, “Americans in 2001 stood between a “*Grand Contested Election for the Presidency of the United States*” and a “BLOODY BATTLE IN AFFGHANISTAN [. . .] and like the *Pequod*, our ship of state was embarking on a voyage that all too many portents marked as ill fated” (305).

32. Due to a series of colonist-borne epidemics, during the eighteenth century the Nantucket Indian population, long the nucleus of the island’s whaling industry, “[died] out at a horrendous pace,” and by 1900 “the island’s Indians were nearly extinct” (Dolin, *Leviathan* 122-123). For Maddox, Ishmael’s “breezy” commentary about Nantucket’s Indian settlers is integral to the logic of the novel, introducing “a complicated network of related allusions by which Melville anchors his story in one of the oldest versions of the American story” (65).

33. Many critics have of course noticed that in naming Ahab’s hunting vessel the *Pequod*, Melville set the stage for a sustained referentiality between the violence that takes place in *Moby-Dick* and the seventeenth-century white-Indian wars that had proven so foundational to the United States’ self-narrated identity. Introducing readers to the ship, Ishmael states: “*Pequod*, you will no doubt remember, was the name of a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians, now extinct as the ancient Medes” (77). In *Regeneration Through Violence*, Slotkin argued that Ahab is the “true American hero,

worthy to be captain of a ship whose ‘wood could only be American,’ whose name could only be Indian”; yet under Ahab’s control, Melville’s representative America finds itself “bound into the wilderness of the world and of the human mind, to seek out and murder the very essence of world, mind, and wilderness” (*Regeneration Through Violence* 549). According to Rogin: “Slotkin calls the conquest of savages and the acquisition of their power regeneration through violence. That was how Andrew Jackson, defeating the Creek Indians during the 1812 War, acquired the name and the authority of Old Hickory. Melville, naming Ahab’s ship the *Pequod*, paid ironic homage to the process” (124).

While the term “ironic homage” is of course much in the spirit of my own approach to *Moby-Dick*’s engagement with westward expansion, Slotkin, Rogin, and others have overly isolated the author’s complex response from the nineteenth-century American scene that produced him. Just as popular nineteenth-century frontier literatures such as Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* and Child’s *Hobomok* (1824) had enlisted the Pequot wars as an effective vehicle for negotiating contemporary anxieties bred by Indian Removal, contemporaneous congressional and journalistic records reveal that Jackson’s conduct towards the Creeks evoked considerable protest and condemnation.

34. Gerlach cites this passage as exemplary of Melville’s ambivalent swing between earnestness and parody, in relation to prevailing discourses of “messianic nationalism” (24-25).

35. Defending Texas’s annexation in 1845, a *New York Morning News* editorial defensively argued:

It is surely not necessary to insist that acquisitions of territory in America, even if accomplished, even if accomplished by force of arms, are not to be viewed in the same light as the invasion s and conquests of the States of the old world [. . .] We take from no man; the reverse rather—we give to man. This national policy, necessity or destiny, we know to be just and beneficent, and we can, therefore, afford to scorn the invective and imputations of rival nations. With the valleys of the Rocky Mountains converted into pastures and sheep-folds, we may with propriety turn to the world and ask, whom have we injured? (quoted in Merk 25)

By the time Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*, such justificatory, anxiety-ridden appeals to American exceptionalism had become commonplace.

36. Ishmael's rhetoric in this passage echoed, for example, the bitter sensibilities Fuller had expressed in her New Year's Day 1848 dispatch. On the front page of the *Tribune*, she had asked: "Where is the genuine Democracy to which the rights of all men are holy? [. . .] I find the cause of tyranny and wrong everywhere the same—and lo! my Country the darkest offender, because with the least excuse, foresworn to the high calling with which she was called,—no champion of the rights of men, but a robber and a jailer; the scourge hid behind her banner; her eyes fixed, not on the stars, but on the possessions of other men" (163-165).

37. Scherting persuasively enumerates connections between Parkman's runaway slave and the *Pequod* "castaway," Pip. Altherr suggests that "Parkman's imperturbable

mule-driver, Delorier, or even more so, Jim Gurney, the sailor turned mountain-man [. . .] may have confirmed Melville's Stubb, or even Flask" (5-6). Also see William Powers' brief 1968 essay, "Bulkington as Henry Chatillon."

38. Indeed, one might even convincingly argue that Melville's fascination with the "blood and thunder" quality of the hunt surpassed that evinced by *Oregon Trail*, which makes clear from the Preface forward that Parkman's primary aim in going West involved not hunting animals but studying Indians.

39. Compare this chapter's sympathetic portrayal of hunted whales, for example, to Parkman's statement in *Oregon Trail* that at first sight of the buffalo, "every feeling of sympathy vanishes; no man who has not experienced it, can understand with what keen relish one inflicts his death wound, with what contentment of mind one beholds him fall" (418).

40. Through Ishmael's imagined exploitation of "the women and children" of a "host" the *Pequod* crew is assailing, Melville also cast in a problematical light the chivalric overtones of nineteenth-century expansionist rhetoric. Shelly Streeby has noted that Mexican War-era literatures tended to use "gendered representations [. . .] to justify conquest, inasmuch as [. . .] Mexican men were too unmanly to defend or govern 'their' women" (121); the "love object" of idealized Mexican women, in such literatures, was "almost always a U.S. officer whose manly body and status as a representative of the nation are the most important things about him" (124). Similarly, even the era's most outspoken defenders of Native Americans' rights largely bought into the idea of Indian women as degraded by their male oppressors and in need of liberation by

America's republican institutions (Maddox 34-35). And in his Preface to the first edition of *Nick of the Woods*, Bird used a familiar chivalric appeal to dismiss anticipated objections to his depiction of the Indian: "The single fact that he wages war—systemic war—upon beings incapable of resistance or defence,—upon women and children, whom all other races of the world, no matter how barbarous, consent to spare,—has hitherto been, and we suppose, to the end of our days will remain, a stumbling-block to our imagination" (29).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Between the publications of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* in 1823 and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* in 1851, it is widely estimated that some 4,000,000 Americans relocated to states and territories west of the Mississippi River. Financial panics in 1819 and again in 1837 contributed significantly to this massive movement; relatedly, emigrant boosters in the eastern and western presses alike reaped enormous profits by playing up the promise of cheap land in the West.¹ While the great emigrant tides to an extent constituted a manifest ground-level expression of prevailing conquest ideologies, they cannot be truthfully represented in these terms alone. Emigrants to the American West during the antebellum period reflected a broad range of needs and desires operating within a national climate impelled by anxiety, desperation, and hope. As Patricia Limerick succinctly observes in *Legacy of Conquest*, by mid-century it had evidently become "an Anglo-American talent to change overnight from being intruders to being legitimate residents and, conversely, to turn the natives into 'foreigners'" (239). However, Limerick is equally correct to note elsewhere in her book that for all the "commonplace," current-era denunciations of "the ecological and moral horror that was Western expansion," westward emigration in the end comprised a "widely varying cast of characters, and [. . .] many of these 'despoilers' wanted, primarily, to find a job and make a living" (133).

The impossibility of reading westward expansion as a stable ideological marker recurs as a motif in the popular antebellum discourse itself, and engagements with this motif occur throughout the literatures I have examined in this dissertation. Cooper's *The Pioneers* reflects "multinational residents [abandoning] their hereditary grievances to become Americans" (Kelly 7) in search of a better life, and ultimately celebrates a melting-pot model of peoples united in their commitment to "opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent" (*The Pioneers* 436); but this triumphalist narrative in large part obtains through Cooper's persistent appropriation of anxieties over the practical dilemmas and moral transgressions attending expansion. Similarly, for all the ideological differences among them, Fuller, Parkman, and Melville all demonstrate an attunement with contemporaneous ambivalences towards the immediate meaning of westward expansion, as well as its longer-term consequences for the political and moral character of the nation.

At the same time, and as I have also emphasized throughout this dissertation, explicitly articulated ideologies of conquest also inform the works I have examined here, just as these ideologies pervaded a great many political, journalistic, and literary treatments of the West throughout the antebellum era. The most ardent expansionists called for the United States to secure coveted lands by any means necessary—including the forced removal of various Indian tribes and the taking up of arms against other nations; and such voices consistently prevailed throughout the antebellum period. During the one-term Presidency of James K. Polk alone, the United States completed the annexation of Texas and acquired the Oregon territory as far as the 49th parallel—these

major territorial additions, combined with Mexico's 1848 cession of southern Texas, as well as most of Arizona, New Mexico, and California, amounted to a staggering net gain of 1,204,000 square miles (Merk vii). In their effort to address and derive lessons from this legacy of violent territorial conquest, many influential literary critics and historians have contributed, from the late twentieth-century to the present, to a narrative of antebellum Anglo-Americans united by an unflinching hostility towards unfamiliar landscapes and peoples. Though to an extent understandable, this narrative distorts the realities of a populace which, as I have attempted to show throughout, remained ideologically diverse and deeply conflicted in its response to Indian Removal, wars for territory, slavery, and environmental depletion.

One of the most emblematic markers of the slippage between critical treatments of the United States' expansionist program and the reality of that program is the discussion surrounding the Indian Removal Act that President Andrew Jackson signed in 1830. Historian Alfred A. Cave has recently debunked the notion—which he demonstrates to be still “widespread” among historians—that the Congress granted Jackson authority “to remove Indians from their homelands at the point of a bayonet” (1331). Cave shows that Jackson ignored provisions in the final bill mandating that Native Americans occupying territories east of the Mississippi could not be *compulsorily* removed (1337). In his dealings with the Georgia Cherokee, Jackson did not execute the expressed will of the United States. Rather, he broke federal law, and as a result ignited the ire of “[a]ntiremoval protestors” (1353) in Congress and throughout the mainstream press, who vociferously called out the immorality and unconstitutionality of his Indian

policy. As I emphasized in Chapter II, Jackson's treatment of Native Americans in Florida rendered him a highly controversial figure well before he won the presidency in 1828; and this controversy was of a piece with broad-ranging debates over westward expansion that ran from the 1820s into the middle of the nineteenth-century.

Throughout the antebellum period, influential politicians, newspaper editors, religious leaders, social reformers, and literary authors collectively vocalized a counter-imperial impulse with which advocates for unchecked expansion were perpetually compelled to negotiate. While each of the primary texts I have examined in this dissertation denotes individual authors' unique perspectives on a variegated range of cultural, political, and aesthetic concerns, they share a profound degree of investment in these debates. Cooper, Fuller, Parkman, and Melville all participated in a popular frontier-writing enterprise that in many ways turns on efforts to bring a sense of resolution to disruptive tensions between ideologies of conquest and subordinate counter-imperial modes of conceiving unfamiliar landscapes and peoples. Attending to the big-talking negotiations at the heart of these texts necessitates a departure from current tendencies among literary critics to associate the age of Manifest Destiny with ideological hegemony; as works by Cooper, Robert Montgomery Bird, and Parkman indicate, even the most triumphalist works of the period were informed by contemporaneous counter-imperial arguments and themes.²

Arriving at a more comprehensive awareness of the presence and nature of the antebellum counter-imperial impulses, moreover, also means resisting the lionization of certain figures from the period, as if they differed in kind from their fellows, or were

somehow fundamentally “ahead of their time.” Hershel Parker has recently (and somewhat sarcastically) observed in a very different context, that Melville in particular has proven a fortuitous figure for critics seeking to identify “views precisely as enlightened as [our] own current views (never *more* enlightened, notice) [. . .] Melville repeatedly put himself on record against the prevailing racial attitude of his times” (“Indian Hating in *The Confidence Man*” 454). But as I argued in my treatment of his attack on the Anglo-triumphalism pervading *Oregon Trail*, Melville’s complex efforts to engage the racial and international Other on their own terms does not reflect a unique political enlightenment on his part, but rather puts on display his capacity for poignantly distilling sensibilities and arguments that not only surrounded him at the moment of his writing, but had for decades substantially informed the mainstream American discourse over frontier expansion. If Melville’s treatment of the Typee, and his protest against Parkman’s use of anti-Indian rhetoric, represents a window for considering the ideological contestations that both predated him and surrounded his own moment, excavating how these contestations played out in the public mind seems to me a worthy endeavor for the sake of historical accuracy. But I also want to suggest that a renewed emphasis on antebellum expansion-related debates has a more immediate relevance to apprehending anxieties and controversies that trouble our own moment.

A conspicuous example of that relevance involves how we might approach the enduring controversy bred by the United States’ invasion of Iraq in March 2003. As I noted in my Introduction, in his speech at the 2008 Democratic Convention, Al Gore aspersed the Iraq war by comparing it to the Mexican War. But beyond its omission of

opposition to the Mexican War, Gore's remark that this "invasion of another country [. . .] was popular when it started but later condemned by history," similarly distorted the discourses surrounding the invasion he was most interested in critiquing. The phrase "popular when it started" leaves out, after all, a nearly year-long runup to the commencement of hostilities that was marked by an increasingly polarizing political climate. And almost exactly a month before the invasion began, protestors staged a worldwide demonstration, with stateside numbers exceeding those of any antiwar protest in the history of the country. On February 18th, cnn.com ran a story headlined "Cities Jammed in Worldwide Protest of War in Iraq," and noted that in addition to protestors assembled at the United Nations building in New York (with estimations ranging from 100,000 to 375,000 attendees) and those gathered at other major American cities, similar "rallies were held across the United States in smaller towns such as Gainesville, Georgia; Macomb, Illinois; and Juneau, Alaska." These demonstrations, of course, like the broader discourses they represented, failed in dramatic fashion, and were likely even countered by the presence of majority support for military action at the time. Yet those who spoke out vociferously against the war from the beginning would be the victims of a distorted view indeed, if years from hence academicians and popular politicians represent the Iraq War as a moment of national galvanization, or an emblem of ideological hegemony among Americans during the early years of the twenty-first century. A more discriminatory approach to the United States' historical relationship with ideologies of conquest is required. The courtesy we ask for ourselves from future scholars and critics, we should be no less willing to extend to those who came before us.

Notes

1. At the same time, westward expansion reflected the antebellum United States' dramatic demographic changes. The number of immigrants to the United States rose from 52, 434 in 1820, to over 2,200,000 in 1850. Unsurprisingly, a great many of these immigrants, like the Anglo-Americans coming from the eastern US, sought to make their fortunes on the western frontier. In her 1844 western travelogue, Margaret Fuller celebrates what had already become Wisconsin's intensely international population; given her impassioned coverage of the European revolutions in 1848, Fuller would have doubtless been unsurprised to know that by midcentury, more than 20% of Wisconsin's population was composed of European immigrants, many of whom arrived as "political refugees" of those failed revolutions (*Making American* 316).

2. Parkman's most popular text also points up the difficulties involved in attempting to fit even a single figure into deceptively pure-seeming categories such as "imperialist" and "anti-imperialist." In addition to reverberating with arguments against the Mexican War, *Oregon Trail* and other writings by Parkman echo *The Pioneers*' anxiety over expansion's impact on the natural environment. Shabecoff has located Parkman among a long line of prominent nineteenth-century thinkers who "helped lay the intellectual aesthetic, moral, scientific, and political foundations of modern environmentalism" (67-68). Emphasizing the presence of "great bridges across American environmental history," Shabecoff argues:

From Daniel Boone, born in the first half of the nineteenth century to John James Audubon, to Grinnell, Teddy Roosevelt, Pinchot, and Muir, to the National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, two of the national organizations leading today's struggle to preserve and protect our land, our resources, our health, and the natural systems upon which life depends [. . .] George Catlin, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Law Olmstead, Francis Parkman, Carl Schurz, and John Wesley Powell [. . .] were the first to teach us that to save ourselves, we must slow the destruction of nature.

(67-68)

WORKS CITED

- Ainsworth, W. Garrison, Esq. "Editor's Preface." *Nick of the Woods; Or the Jibbenainosay: A Story of Kentucky*. By Robert Montgomery Bird. London: Richard Bentley, 1837. v-viii.
- Altherr, Thomas. "'Drunk with the Chase': The Influence of Francis Parkman's *The California and Oregon Trail* upon Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick, or the Whale*." *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* 21 (1990): 1-14.
- Avallone, Charlene. "Women Reading Melville/ Melville Reading Women." In *Melville & Women*, edited by Elizabeth Schultz and Haskell Springer. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006. 41-59.
- Batman, Richard. "Foreword." In *A Tour on the Prairies*, edited by John Francis McDermott. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1956. xiii-xvii.
- Bean, Judith Mattson, and Joel Myerson, eds. *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New York Tribune, 1844-1846*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Beaver, Harold. "Parkman's Crack-Up: A Bostonian on the Oregon Trail." *New England Quarterly* 48 (1975): 84-103.
- Bercaw, Mary K. *Melville's Sources*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

- Berkin, Carol, et al, Eds. *Making America: A History of the United States*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.
- Billington, Ray Allen. *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism*. New York: Rinehart, 1952.
- Birchfield, D. L. "Lonesome Duck: The Blueing of a Texas-American Myth." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 7 (1995): 45-64.
- Bird, Robert Montgomery. *Nick of the Woods; or, the Jibbenainosay: A Tale of Kentucky*. Author's Revised Edition, edited by Curtis Dahl. New Haven, Connecticut: College and University Press, 1967a.
- _____. "Preface to the First Edition." *Nick of the Woods; or, the Jibbenainosay: A Tale of Kentucky*, edited by Curtis Dahl. New Haven, Connecticut: College and University Press, 1967b. 27-29.
- Bochin, Hal W. "Tom Corwin's Speech Against the Mexican War: Courageous but Misunderstood." *Ohio History* 90 (1981): 33-53.
- Brandt, Anthony. "Introduction." In *The Oregon Trail*, edited by Anthony Brandt. Washington, D.C. : National Geographic Society, 2002. xiii-xvi.
- Brickhouse, Anna. *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Bryant, John. "'A Work I Have Never Happened to Meet': Melville's Versions of Porter in *Typee*." In *"Whole Oceans Away": Melville and the Pacific*, edited by Jill Barnum, Wyn Kelley, and Christopher Sten. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007. 83-97.

_____. "Introduction." *Typee*. By Herman Melville. 1846. New York; Penguin, 1996. ix-xxx.

Buell, Lawrence. "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon." In *American Literature, American Culture*, edited by Gordon Hutner. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 592-610.

Burnham, Philip. "The Fiction of the Native: The Politics of Identity in American Indian Fiction of the West." In *Reading the West: New Essays on the Literature of the American West*, edited by Michael Kowalewski. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 199-212.

Busby, Mark. *Larry McMurtry and the West: An Ambivalent Relationship*. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 1995.

Cain, William. "Prospects for Change." In *The Blithedale Romance*. By Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1852. Edited by William Cain. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 221-24.

Capper, Charles. *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life*. Vol. II. *The Public Years*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cave, Alfred A. "Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830." *Historian* 65 (2003): 1330-53.

Cheyfitz, Eric. "Savage Law: The Plot Against American Indians in *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. M'Intosh* and *The Pioneers*." In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993. 109-128.

“Cities jammed in worldwide protest of war in Iraq: Demonstrations follow divided day at United Nations.” Accessed February 18, 2003.

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/15/sprj.irq.protests.main/>

Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Pioneers: or, The Sources of the Susquehanna*. New York: Signet, 1964.

Cooper, Michaela Bruckner. “Textual Wandering and Anxiety in Margaret Fuller’s *Summer on the Lakes*.” In *Margaret Fuller’s Cultural Critique: Her Age and Legacy*, edited by Fritz Fleishman. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. 171-189.

Curtis, Diana. “Suspicious, Secrets, and the American Psyche: Melville’s *The Confidence Man* and Post-9/11 Paranoia.” *Atenea* 26 (2006): 37-44.

Dekker, George. *The American Historical Romance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Delbanco, Andrew. *Melville: His World and Work*. New York: Knopf, 2005.

DeVoto, Bernard. *The Year of Decision: 1846*. New York: St. Martin’s, 2000.

Dolin, Eric Jay. *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America*. New York: Norton, 2007.

Doolen, Andy. *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Doughty, Howard N. *Francis Parkman*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962.

Drinnon, Richard. *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire Building*. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1997.

- Ellison, Julie. *Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- “Emancipation in New York.” <http://www.slavenorth.com/nyemancip.htm>
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Emerson in His Journals*, edited by Joel Porte. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Estes, David S, ed. “Introduction: Traveler, Sportsman, Humorist.” *A New Collection of Thomas Bangs Thorpe’s Sketches of the Old Southwest*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989. 3-26.
- “First Word After the Election.” Editorial. *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 15 (Nov. 1844): 427-30.
- Foos, Paul. *A Short, Offhand Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict During the Mexican-American War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Fraleigh, Sondra. *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.
- Franklin, Wayne. *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Fuller, Margaret. *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*. Vol. III. Edited by. Robert Hudspeth. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- _____. *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*. Vol. VI. Edited by Robert Hudspeth. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994.

_____. *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*. Edited by Susan Belasco Smith.

Urbana, Illinois: Illinois University Press, 1991a.

_____. *"These Sad But Glorious Days": Dispatches from Europe, 1846-1850*,

Edited by Larry J. Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith. New Haven,

Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1991b.

_____. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Larry J. Reynolds. Norton

Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 1998.

Fussell, Edwin. *Frontier: American Literature and the American West*. Princeton, New

Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Gerlach, John. "Messianic Nationalism in the Early Works of Herman Melville: Against

Perry Miller." *Arizona Quarterly* 28 (1972): 5-26.

Gilmore, Susan. "Margaret Fuller 'Receiving' the 'Indians.'" In *Margaret Fuller's*

Cultural Critique: Her Age and Legacy, edited by Fritz Fleishman. New York:

Peter Lang, 2000. 191-227.

Golay, Michael. *The Tide of Empire: America's March to the Pacific*. Hoboken, New

Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

Gore, Albert, Jr. Speech Delivered to the Democratic National Convention. Denver,

Colorado. August 28, 2008. Accessed April 1, 2009.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/08/28/al-gore-dnc-speech_n_122234.html

Graebner, Norman. "Thomas Corwin and the Election of 1848: A Study of Conservative

Politics." *Journal of Southern History*. 17 (1951): 162-179.

Greeley, Horace. *The American Conflict*. Vol. 1. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1864.

Griffin, Susan M. *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hartnett, Stephen. "Fanny Fern's 1855 *Ruth Hall*, the Cheerful Brutality of Capitalism, & the Irony of Sentimental Rhetoric." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 1-18.

Herbert, T. Walker. *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Irving, Washington. *A Tour on the Prairies*. Edited by John Francis McDermott. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1956.

_____. "Philip of Pokanoket: An Indian Memoir." *The Analectic Magazine* 3 (June 1814): 502-515.

_____. "Traits of Indian Character." *The Analectic Magazine* 3 (February 1814): 145-155.

Johannsen, Robert. *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Kaplan, Amy. "'Left Alone With America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture." In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993. 3-21.

- Karcher, Carolyn. "Introduction." In *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*. By Catharine Maria Sedgwick, 1827. Edited by Carolyn Karcher. New York: Penguin, 1998. ix-xxxviii.
- _____. "Moby-Dick and the War on Terror." In "Whole Oceans Away": *Melville and the Pacific*, edited by Jill Barnum, Wyn Kelley, and Christopher Sten. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007. 305-15.
- _____. *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.
- Kelly, William P. *Plotting America's Past: Fenimore Cooper and the Leatherstocking Tales*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Kowalewski, Michael. "Introduction." In *Reading the West: New Essays on the Literature of the American West*, edited by Michael Kowalewski. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 1-18.
- Ladd, William. "The Peace Movement." *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. 19 (Feb. 1842): 107-121.
- Lenihan, John H. *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.
- Levin, David. "Introduction." In *The Oregon Trail*, edited by David Levin. New York: Penguin, 1985. 7-26.

Leyda, Jay. *The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891*.

New York: Gordian Press, 1969.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the*

American West. New York: Norton, 1987.

Littlefield, Daniel. "Washington Irving and the American Indian." *American Indian*

Quarterly 5 (1979): 135-154.

Livermore, Abiel Abbot. *The War with Mexico Reviewed*. Boston: WM. Crosby and

H.P. Nichols, 1850.

Lowell, James Russell. *The Biglow Papers*. Edited by Thomas Wortham. Dekalb,

Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1977.

Maddox, Lucy. *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature & the Politics of*

Indian Affairs. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Manning, Susan. "Note on the Text." In *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*.

By Washington Irving, edited by Susan Manning. New York: Oxford University

Press, 1996. xxx-xxxiii.

Martineau, Harriet. *Retrospect of Western Travel*. Vol. 1. London: Saunders and Otley,

1838.

Matthiessen, F.O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and*

Whitman. London: Oxford University Press, 1941.

McMurtry, Larry. *Lonesome Dove*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.

_____. *Oh What a Slaughter: Massacres in the American West: 1846-1890*.

New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

_____. "Southwestern Literature?" *A Narrow Grave: Essays On Texas*.

Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987. 31-54.

_____. *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond*.

New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.

McWilliams, John. *Political Justice in a Republic: James Fenimore Cooper's America*.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Melville, Herman. *Mardi and a Voyage Thither*. Edited by Harrison Hayford, Hershel

Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University

Press, 1970.

_____. *Moby-Dick*. Edited by Tom Quirk. New York: Penguin, 1988.

_____. "Mr. Parkman's Tour." In *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces*,

1839-1860. Vol. 9, edited by Harrison Hayford, Alma A. MacDougall, and G.

Thomas Tanselle. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987. 230-

34, 641-44.

_____. *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*. Edited by John Bryant. New

York: Penguin, 1996.

Meola, Frank. "A Passage through 'Indians': Masculinity and Violence in Francis

Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*." *American Transcendental Quarterly* 13 (1999):

5-25.

Merk, Frederick. *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A*

Reinterpretation. New York: Knopf, 1963.

- Miller-Pullenhage, John. "'Kin to Nobody': The Disruption of Genealogy in
McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*." *Critique* 47 (2005): 73-89.
- Moore, L. Hugh. "Francis Parkman on the Oregon Trail: A Study in Cultural
Prejudice." *Western American Literature* 12 (1977): 185-197.
- Morrison, Michael. *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny
and the Coming of the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 1997.
- "One Last Word Before the Election." Editorial. *United States Magazine and
Democratic Review* 15 (Oct. 1844): 323-28.
- O'Sullivan, John. "Annexation." *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. 17
(Jul./Aug. 1845): 5-10.
- Parker, Hershel. "The Historical Fact of Indian Hating." In *The Confidence Man: His
Masquerade*. By Herman Melville, edited by Hershel Parker and Mark
Niemeyer. New York: Norton, 2006. 453-54.
- Parker, Hershel, and Harrison Hayford, eds. *Moby-Dick*. By Herman Melville. New
York: Norton, 2002.
- Parkman, Francis. *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*. New York: Collier Books, 1962.
- _____. *The Journals of Francis Parkman*. Edited by Mason Wade. Vol. 2.
New York: Harper Brothers, 1947.
- _____. *Letters of Francis Parkman*. Edited by Wilbur R. Jacobs. Vol. 1.
Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.
- _____. *The Oregon Trail*. Edited by David Levin. New York: Penguin, 1985.

- Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958.
- Pease, Donald E. "New Perspectives on U.S. Culture and Imperialism." In *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 22-37.
- Penna, Anthony N. *Nature's Bounty: Historical and Modern Environmental Perspectives*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.
- Philbrick, Nathaniel. "'Every Wave is a Fortune': Nantucket Island and the Making of an American Icon." *New England Quarterly* 66 (1993): 434-447.
- Pratt, Julius W. "The Origin of 'Manifest Destiny.'" *The American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 795-798.
- Prucha, F. P. "Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment." *Journal of American History* 56 (1969): 527-539.
- Quay, Sara E. *Westward Expansion*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- "The Re-Annexation of Texas: In its Influence on the Duration of Slavery." Editorial. *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 15 (Jul. 1844): 11-16.
- Reavis, L.U. *A Representative Life of Horace Greeley*. New York: S. Low, Son. &co., 1872.
- Remini, Robert V. *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*. New York: Norton, 1991.
- Rev. of Typee. *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion*. May 1846. 240.

Rev. of *Typee*. *New Englander*. July 1846: 449-450.

Rev. of *Typee*. *Universalist Review*. July 1846: 326-327.

Reynolds, David S. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. New York: Knopf, 1988.

Reynolds, Larry J. *Devils & Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne's Damned Politics*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

_____. *European Revolutions and the American Literary Renaissance*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988.

_____. "Prospects for the Study of Margaret Fuller." *Resources for American Literary Study* 26 (2000): 139-158.

Ripley, George. Rev. of *Typee*, by Herman Melville. *Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress*. (April 1846): 263-266.

Robinson, Forrest G. *Having it Both Ways: Self-Subversion in Western Popular Classics*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.

Rogin, Michael Paul. *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*. New York: Knopf, 1983.

Roth, Mitchel. *Issues of Westward Expansion*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Rourke, Constance. *American Humor: A Study of the National Character*. New York: Doubleday, 1955.

- Rowe, John Carlos. "Melville's *Typee*: U.S. Imperialism at Home and Abroad." In *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*, edited by Donald E. Pease. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994. 255-78.
- _____. "Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality." *PMLA* 118 (2003): 78-89.
- Rozelle, Lee. *Ecosublime: Environmental Awe and Terror from New World to Oddworld*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Sachs, Aaron. *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism*. New York: Viking, 2006.
- Scherting, Jack. "Tracking the *Pequod* along the Oregon Trail: The Influence of Parkman's Narrative on Imagery and Characters in *Moby-Dick*." *Western American Literature* 22 (1987): 3-15.
- Schroeder, John H. *Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973.
- Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*. Edited by Carolyn Karcher. New York: Penguin, 1998.
- Shabecoff, Philip. *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2003.
- Shankman, Kimberly C. *Compromise and the Constitution: The Political Thought of Henry Clay*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999.
- Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1985.

_____. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Harper, 1993.

_____. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860*. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1973.

Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Smith, Susan Belasco. "Introduction." In Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, edited by Susan Belasco Smith. Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1991. vii-xxii.

Spiller, Robert. "Afterword." In *The Pioneers: or, The Sources of the Susquehanna*, edited by Robert Spiller. New York: Signet, 1964.

Steele, Jeffrey. *Transfiguring America: Myth, Ideology, and Mourning in Margaret Fuller's Writing*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2001.

Stowe, William. *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Streeby, Shelly. *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*. Berkley: California University Press, 2002.

Terrie, Philip G. "The Other within: Indianization on the Oregon Trail." *The New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 376-392.

Tonkovich, Nicole. "Traveling in the West, Writing in the Library: Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*." *Legacy* 10 (1993): 79-102.

- Torr, James D. Ed. *Westward Expansion*. San Diego, California: Greenhaven Press, 2003.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1920.
- “Twelfth Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society.” *Liberator* 16 (May 22, 1846): 82-83.
- Urbanski, Marie Mitchell Olsen. “The Seeress of Prevorst: The Central Jewell in *Summer on the Lakes*.” In *Margaret Fuller: Visionary of the New Age*, edited by Marie Mitchell Olsen Urbanski. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980. 142-159.
- Wallace, James D. *Early Cooper and His Audience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Weathers, Willie. “*Moby-Dick* and the Nineteenth-Century Scene.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 1 (1960): 477-501.
- White, Richard. “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*”: *A New History of the American West*. Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1991.
- Williams, Robert C. *Horace Greeley: Champion of American Freedom*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Zarefsky, David. “Henry Clay and the Election of 1844: The Limits of a Rhetoric of Compromise.” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 79-96.
- Zwarg, Christina. “Footnoting the Sublime: Margaret Fuller on Black Hawk’s Trail.” *American Literary History* 5 (1993). 616-642.

VITA

Nicholas M. Lawrence received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1996. He received his Master of Arts degree in English in Western Carolina in 2002. His research interests include nineteenth century American literature, literature of the American West, American Studies, Environmental Studies, and Masculinity Studies.

Mr. Lawrence may be reached at Department of English, Texas A&M University, Mailstop 4227 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843. His email address is: nml02@hotmail.com.